



## ***Creating a New Layout Room***

***...plus:***

- ***Women in Model Railroading***
- ***Here Comes the Texas Express***
- ***2022 LSR Convention Contest Results***
- ***The Colorado Model Railroad Museum***
- ***A Visit to the Hobby Shop***



## The Marker Lamp

The Official Publication of  
The Lone Star Region of the  
National Model Railroad  
Association

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The editorial policy of The Marker Lamp, the official publication of The Lone Star Region, shall be to contribute, wherever possible, to the promotion, growth and understanding of the hobby of Model Railroading, within the confines of good taste and responsibility. The Marker Lamp is published once each quarter by and for the members of The Lone Star Region of The National Model Railroad Association. Articles appearing in The Marker Lamp are the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of the officers or membership of The Lone Star Region or The National Model Railroad Association.

Address all correspondence, news, photos and drawings to the editor. All material will be gladly accepted and will be used depending on the availability of space and suitability of material. None will be returned unless a stamped, self-addressed envelope is provided. Correspondence relating to Pike Ads and Dealer Ads should be addressed to Speed Muller [lsrtreasurer@huntatrophymra.org](mailto:lsrtreasurer@huntatrophymra.org)

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## President's Message



by Donna Orr  
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## New Things are Happening in the NMRA

### *WIMR: Women in Model Railroading*

**T**he NMRA is excited to offer the opportunity to women around the world to become members of this new Special Interest Group - Women in Model Railroading! As a recognized SIG within the NMRA, we expect this group to be vibrant in the world of model railroading.

The purpose of the Women in Model Railroading is to introduce, encourage and connect women in or interested in the hobby of model railroading. The SIG is designed for education, enrichment, social interactions, and all-around fun. This group is meant to be inclusive and supportive of all women in the hobby and railfan world. We plan to host a few social meetings per year including online and at train shows/conventions around the country. The SIG will provide women in their local NMRA regions the support needed to create activities or gatherings, in order to grow the hobby and remove perceived barriers for women modelers.

**Newsletter:** An email newsletter will be sent once per year and hopefully more often as we grow this group.

**Facebook Pages:** "[Women in Model Railroading](#)" is for women in the model railroad hobby to share their world. "[The Steam Sisters Group](#)" is for women railfans to post their photos of trains and is open to all. Welcome to the Women in Model Railroading Special Interest Group! We look forward to getting to know you!

Please use this link to join:

<https://forms.gle/aKPhcXU1sthKW1MQ8>

Do not forget that the NMRA magazine has gone digital. Go to [NMRA.org](https://www.nmra.org), register under Membership, and download the app. And you can thank our own Riley Triggs, he has done a wonderful job with this project.

Also you can register for the 2023 Texas Express National Convention. Just go to [2023texasexpress.com](https://2023texasexpress.com). It is going to be great!

And it's "Christmas time again." I hope all of you have a great holiday.

Stay tuned, there is more to come.



## From the Editor



by Peter Kazmir  
[peter@centexnmra.org](mailto:peter@centexnmra.org)

### It Take a Village

**M**odel Railroading is an amazing hobby. There's something in it for everyone: carpentry, electronics, painting, operations, programming, model building, scenery, drafting, 3D printing - you name it, Model Railroading's got it. And the beauty of the hobby is that you don't have to be a master of - or even enjoy - all of those aspects. There is a large and friendly community just waiting to help.

While a lot of that help comes one-on-one, a great deal comes in group settings. One example is through clinics - and I'll get back to those in a minute. But a very important channel is through print (and now, online) media. Who amongst you, when first getting into the hobby, didn't eagerly page through an issue of *Model Railroader*? Who hasn't used some how-to book (or YouTube video) to learn a skill you still use today?

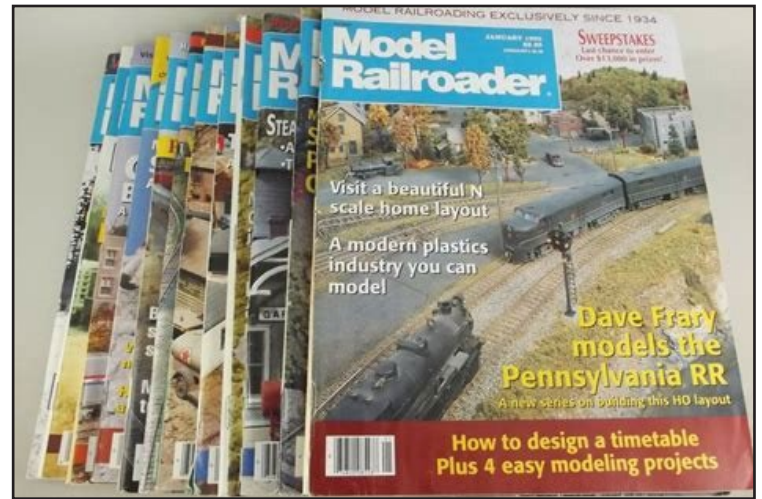
I am very proud to continue the tradition of editing the *Marker Lamp*. I hope to build upon my predecessors to deliver a high-quality publication that informs and entertains model railroaders in the Lone Star Region and beyond. But I can't do it alone. I need the help of the community. I need content from **you**.

What kind of content? Anything! How-to articles. Stories. Tours of your (or someone else's) layout or museum. Ideas for modeling prototype industries. A story about how you built that new structure. Your favorite way to operate. Historical articles about how railroad signaling came to be, or how it works today. Photos -- lots of photos.

And don't worry about your writing skills. I'm here to help, I have "Editor" in my title. Got a great clinic in PowerPoint form that you want to turn into an article? We can do it!

I would like to include a how-to article, a layout tour, a prototype article, and other content in each future issue - plus regular columns and series like the Historian's Corner, Getting Started in Model Railroading, and RRRduino. I especially would like to include a photo section of reader-contributed pictures. But I can't do any of that without content!

In addition to helping and/or entertaining your fellow



model railroaders, contributors receive NMRA AP credit towards the [Author certificate](#). This is one of the easiest certificates to earn, in my opinion, and can help you on your way towards becoming a Master Model Railroader.

If you're interested - or have any suggestions or feedback at all - please send me an email!

Earlier I mentioned clinics. They are another great way to share, learn and entertain. I have always enjoyed attending clinics within my Division and at LSR Conventions and I think we are all in for a treat: For the first time in decades, the national NMRA convention is coming to Texas this coming August. The **2023 Texas Express** will be held at the Gaylord Texan Resort and Convention Center in Grapevine (between Dallas and Fort Worth). If you love clinics, this will be the place to be. I understand there are already more than 200 clinics scheduled. The convention will also include amazing prototype, layout, and general interest tours, a contest room, the National Train Show, and more. I strongly encourage everyone to register today at <https://www.2023texasexpress.com>.

Finally, I want to apologize for the tardiness of this issue. On our old schedule, this issue would have (theoretically) been published in August. Many factors contributed to the timing (including the Editor transition) but rest assured we will be getting back to a regular schedule.

However, that schedule will be shifting slightly. The Spring issue will now be published in March, Summer in July, Fall in October, and Winter in December. We'll be catching up to that schedule this coming year so look for the next issue around the end of February followed by another in April.

Until then, keep the fun in Model Railroading!

# Jim Lofland



**J**immy Jack Lofland was born on November 24, 1940 in Dallas, Texas. He passed away on May 8, 2022 at the age of 81. Born and raised in Texas, Jimmy graduated from Rockwall High School and then graduated from the University of Texas in Mechanical Engineering.

Jim was the proud husband to his wife, Sarah "Sally" of 54 years. Together they raised three sons Jeffrey, Jason (Michelle), and Jeremy (Megan.) Jimmy was "Paw-Paw" to his five grandchildren Jackson, Claire, Emma, Aiden and Joseph.

Jim retired from Shell Oil in 2002 and has enjoyed being with family, traveling, and his lifelong hobby of model railroading. Jimmy enjoyed taking trips by train, vacationing in the Rocky Mountains, and hosting family cookouts.

Jimmy is survived by his brother, Eddie (Carolyn) and is preceded in death by his parents Jim and Edna Lofland of Rockwall, Texas.

# Marilyn Pickard

**W**e lost Marilyn Pickard, the matriarch of the Comanche and Indian Gap Railroad, August 10, 2022. It is a sad day for all. As with so many of us in the hobby, Marilyn supported Roy from the very beginning. It all started in the 60's when Roy had an operating HO railroad above their drugstore in Rosenberg, TX. It was right across the street from the UP/ATSF interlocking and Tower 17.

After the sale of the drug store, they decided they wanted to move to the country to start a cattle ranch. Roy returned to Texas A&M University to get his degree in animal husbandry. Well, they had their ranch (and the underlying reason {if the truth be told} was to have land to build their live steam railroad) and now it was time to start building it. As most of you know, it is a live steam 1/8 scale railroad that

actually operates like a real railroad. Marilyn was on board from the very beginning. In 1972 the Pickard's laid the first track from Indian Gap to Zuni and eventually to the west and West Yard and then on to Comanche east bound.

A quick side note: when Roy was on the Ford tractor, trying to cut the gap outside of Comanche Yard of giant boulders/rocks at the current Pickard Gap, Marilyn saw the Ford on a 45-degree slant with Roy hanging on for dear life! She told Roy to get off that before you kill yourself!! That's when the Friends of the CIG, with Tom Stamey in the lead, had Loren Jennings from Gotebo, OK bring a big Cat D9 to finish the job in about 2-3 days.

For many years, it was Marilyn, Roy and the boys (Frank, Jud, and Chip) working and building the CIG. And of course Lynn was always involved. Finally about 1978, Truman Heffner and Jim Murray discovered the CIG and took some videos. Live steamers from Texas and eventually round the country and world (England, New Zealand, South Africa, Zimbabwe, etc.) started to show up to build and operate on the CIG.

This is about the time when Marilyn opened the CIG Harvey House for evening meals and Mexican Train games. And the people started coming to CIG. Marilyn was serving meals at the house for 6-8 people and then all of a sudden it was 20. That is when we started arranging the catering meals we are doing to this day.

Sometime in the early 90's people from California started coming bringing their wives and whole gaggle of motor homes/trailers. A couple of the those meets, Marilyn entertained up to 15-20 wives. They would shop in Goldthwaite, Hico, etc. It was great fun and Marilyn loved being the hostess. One time Marilyn took a tumble and had a pronounced black eye. That evening at dinner, all the ladies took their makeup and made black eyes. What fun they had!

As time went on, age started catching up with the California crew. Fewer and fewer of them came but by that time, the word was out on the fabulous CIG RR. About that time, I started the Spring Fling for all modelers including the tabletop guys from around the country. Because of Roy and Marilyn's foresight (and Danny and Billy Click involvement), the CIG is stronger and better than ever and the meets still attract 50 to 100 attendees. Obviously, Marilyn had cut back because of health issues, but she still loved seeing all the people that attended their meet. And she, to very end, always came down to the track for at least one dinner.

Susan and I spent many afternoons with Marilyn and Lynn over the past few years and her mind was always sharp as ever and never missed a moment.

All of us miss Roy and Marilyn every day. May they Rest in peace.

*-Contributed by Peter Bryan*

# Denny McGonigle



I have known Denny for many years. I'm not sure when it all started, but it was a friendship that developed and grew over many years. With his passing it has definitely left a big void in my life.

Denny has been coming to help me with the fall layout tours, along with Don Formanek, since I opened my layout for tours after our move to Navasota. I always told Denny that he had a gift with kids. He would sit and run trains and watch the kids as they made their

way through the train room and by his observing them, he was able to pick out which kids would be good ones to run the trains. He would then spend time teaching them how to use the throttle and of course which button was the horn. He would follow them and help when needed, but mostly with his guidance they did a great job on their own. I could always tell when he had handed off the throttle because the horn would be used way more than normal, which was just fine with me. The look on the child's face and the smiles on the parent's face was all Denny wanted as he hoped that he planted a seed in that child that would grow over the years.

Denny and Don have been helping me with my layout on upgrades and repairs. While they normally came over together, I need to highlight one morning that Denny showed up unexpected. Denny called me one morning while I was in the train room working on a switch that was giving me problems on the Narrow Gauge. I guess my frustration came through over the phone as I told him the lack of progress in getting cars to run through it. We hung up the phone and I went back to doing something else while I figured in my mind that I would just need to build a new switch. A couple hours went by and the door to the train room opened and Denny said let's get that switch working. Together we worked on the switch with picks and files for a couple of hours, the problem was solved, ballast under the throw bar. Denny's advice was that as I install more switches dig a little area out under the throw bar so that a piece of ballast doesn't cause a problem. So, any of the switches you see that area dug out, you know are after that day.

One of the things that I am very thankful for was operating with Denny. Denny was part of a Tuesday operating group, "The Geezers". I believe he was a founding member. We had operated together on several occasions and when there was an opening in the group, he asked me if I would like to join the Tuesday group. I said yes and the Tuesday group has been one of the highlights of my week. Coffee, cookies and good friends operating. With the passing

of Denny, we are down to operating less often since we not only lost a friend, we also lost a good layout.

Many people don't know that Denny was a craftsman builder of structures. I believe he has built over 20 structures on Eddie Carroll's layout and a couple on mine. Denny didn't enter contests with his models - didn't like all the paperwork - but the quality was always deserving of awards. As an HO modeler he was intrigued with my O/On3 layout and buildings. After one of the open houses, he asked me about building something in O Scale. I was standing near my shelf of kits and almost before he could get the words out of his mouth, I handed him a kit. The kit was a Sierra West Dueling Shacks. Several weeks later he brought me back the finished models, each one of them contest quality and they now sit proudly on my layout and will always be a memory of a man I dearly miss.

*-Contributed by Chuck Lind, courtesy of the Derail*

## Teresa Parker

**T**eresa Parker of Missouri City passed away on September 25 due to a brain aneurysm. Teresa was born on December 29, 1955 in Massillon, Ohio to Robert and Mary Exroad. She was the second of three daughters.

Teresa graduated from Rochester Area High School in Rochester, Pennsylvania in 1973. After graduation, she moved to Washington, DC to work for Voice of America.

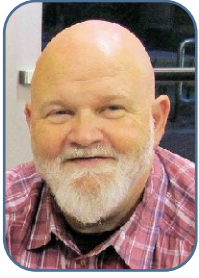
The family moved to Galveston, Texas in 1982, where Teresa began her career as a legal secretary. She later worked as a legal assistant at a number of law firms in the Galveston and Houston areas. She most recently was working at Coats Rose, P.C.

Teresa met Scott Parker while serving on the Hideout Committee for the Houston Rodeo and married him on March 8, 2012. Their reception included a little 3-piece band from Texas and 70k of their closest friends and family (ZZ Top, at the Rodeo that night).

Scott and Teresa are longtime members of the Houston Rodeo and served on the Hideout, Main Club, and Horticulture Committees in leadership roles.

Teresa loved her family and friends. She was fun-loving and cherished time with the family. She loved all types of music, but she especially loved Toby Keith and there was a period of time she and a group of friends traveled all over the US to attend his concerts. She had pizza on Friday nights and hot dogs on Saturday. She also supported all the kids when raising money for school or other events. Her favorite charity was the Alzheimer's Foundation as she lost her father to this disease.

## Up the Tracks Events Calendar



by Bill Dryden  
NMRA & LSR Life Member

Here are upcoming events within the LSR of which I am aware. I will provide all the information YOU send me or I can glean from other publications, websites, etc., for these events. Additional information may be available through the NMRA Scale Rails and/or various trade magazines or various websites. Also, note that all show times and dates are at the discretion of the sponsoring organization and are subject to change. Please forward any and all information about upcoming events or activities in your area, club, etc., to me, via e-mail at [bdr149@airmail.net](mailto:bdr149@airmail.net).

## 2023 Texas Express

NMRA Convention

August 19 – 27, 2023

Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center  
Grapevine, Texas

[www.2023texasexpress.com](http://www.2023texasexpress.com)

**Come all!**

**PARTICIPATE!!!**

### RECURRING EVENTS AND MEETINGS

#### LSR Division 3 - Trinity River Division – Allen

The Trinity River Division meets on the 3rd Saturday of every month at the Christ Servant Lutheran Church, Allen Texas. Occasionally things change due to scheduling conflicts so pay close attention to the email meeting notices that go out a week before the meeting. If you would like to be added to the email list contact Donna Orr at [donnalorrtx@gmail.com](mailto:donnalorrtx@gmail.com).

#### LSR Division 4 – Cen-Tex Division – Austin

The Cen-Tex Division meets bi-monthly at the Austin Northwest Recreational Center, 2913 Northland Drive, Austin, TX. Meetings are held at 10:00 am on the 2nd Saturday of the odd months and include clinics, show-and-tell, DCC minute, social activities and a layout open house. For more information about upcoming meetings, see <https://centexnmra.org> or contact [director@centexnmra.org](mailto:director@centexnmra.org) to be added to the mail list.

#### LSR Division 6 – South Texas Division – San Antonio

Division 6 – South Texas Division, hosts quarterly meetings at the Longhorn Cafe at 12311 Nacogdoches Road in San Antonio. Please come out and join us. For more information contact. Don Winn at [donswinn@gmail.com](mailto:donswinn@gmail.com)

#### LSR Division 8 - Texas Gulf Division – Houston

Division 8, the Texas Gulf Division, meets the 2nd Saturday every odd month from 10:00 am to 12 Noon at the Tracey Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Drive, Houston, TX 77042. For more information contact Phil Stewart at [pstewart1225@yahoo.com](mailto:pstewart1225@yahoo.com).

### Alamo Model Railroad Engineers - San Antonio

The Alamo Model Railroad Engineers meets the 2nd Friday of the month at 7:30 pm in the Zucht Building at the Texas Transportation Museum, 11791 Wetmore Rd., San Antonio TX. For more information call Peter Shavney (210) 317-3661 or Gene Turner (210) 355-2777; or visit the web site [www.alamomodelrailroadengineers.com](http://www.alamomodelrailroadengineers.com).

### Austin Model Railway Society - Austin

The Austin Model Railway Society is a HO scale modular group that is open to new members and meets once a month. For more information please email Riley Triggs at [president@austinrailway.org](mailto:president@austinrailway.org) or visit the web site [www.austinrailway.org](http://www.austinrailway.org).

### Houston Area "G" Gaugers - Rosenberg

On the 4th Sunday of each month, the Houston Area "G" Gaugers (HAGG) model train club meets at the Rosenberg Railroad Museum to run their special trains on the tracks of the Garden Railroad Exhibit. The museum also hosts fun seasonal activities for the kids on this day. Steam engines, circus trains, patriotic trains or everyone's favorite Thomas? You never know what trains you'll see. Rosenberg Railroad Museum, 1921 Avenue F, Rosenberg, TX. More information: [info@RosenbergRRMuseum.org](mailto:info@RosenbergRRMuseum.org).

### Houston Area Live Steamers

HALS has over 9,000 feet of track for you to enjoy and ride on most any Saturday of the year. Someone is usually there every Saturday with special run, operations, waybills/timetable, work and fun run days scheduled throughout the year. Our public run days are the 3rd Saturday of the month March through November. Come see our 2,500 foot expansion in Phase 4. Model Railroaders (any scale) are welcome to attend most any time. Check our web site out at [www.hals.org](http://www.hals.org) for schedule of events or e-mail Rick White at [rick.white.jr@gmail.com](mailto:rick.white.jr@gmail.com) for more information.

### New Braunfels Railroad Museum

Kids Fun Day is held on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at the New Braunfels Railroad Museum, 302 South San Antonio Street (in the 1907 Restored Railroad Depot), New Braunfels, TX. Museum phone (830) 627-2447. Kids of all ages will have the opportunity to run model trains and become a Jr. Engineer. Also among the displays at the Kids Fun Day will be a large US Army Model Garden (G) Scale and Lego Trains. Visit our Steam Engine, Caboose, Dining Car (available for Birthday Parties) and Box Car. There will be other fun, train related activities, additional model trains, train artifacts, our 1907 depot are on display. The Railroad Museum opens at 10:00 am on Saturdays. For field trip scheduling and more information, call Howard Young (210) 542-6121, or visit us at [www.nbrrm.org](http://www.nbrrm.org).

### North Texas Council of Railroad Clubs – Irving

The North Texas Council of Railroad Clubs (NTC) meets the 3rd Tuesday of the month. Visit the website [www.dfwtrainshows.com](http://www.dfwtrainshows.com) for more information about the NTC, its meeting site, member clubs or sponsored events.

### San Antonio Model Railroad Association - San Antonio

The San Antonio Model Railroad Association, SAMRA, is open to new members and meets on the 2nd Friday of each month at 7:30 pm in the Bob Clarke Rail Heritage Museum, 7702 Narrow Pass, Live Oak, TX. Please visit our website [www.samratx.org](http://www.samratx.org) for information about our activities and their dates and times. Also, like us on Facebook.

### South Texas Railroad Socials – San Antonio

The "Socials" are a casual gathering of train folks in South Texas, both modelers and prototype railfans. We gather quarterly for a couple hours of Clinics and Presentations, Show-n-Tell, regional news, Q&A and funny video clips. Not a meeting, not a club, just buy lunch at the restaurant and use their party room. Started in 2018, went virtual via Zoom in 2020, going hybrid in 2021 (back to in-person and virtual). Plus, we have Shop Talk, a quarterly 'project guys' round table gathering, in between the Socials. Read more, see photos from past Socials and find our next date, at [www.SouthTexasRR.com](http://www.SouthTexasRR.com).

### Texas Northern Model Railroad Club – Dallas (North)

The Texas Northern Model Railroad Club business meeting is the 1st Thursday of the month and for regular meetings and on Thursday evenings and most Saturdays. If you like to operate, come by on Tuesday nights to join our weekly operation session. Located in North Dallas at 11999 Plano Road., Suite 154, Dallas, TX 75243. For more information: [www.texasnorthern.org](http://www.texasnorthern.org).

### Texas Western Model Railroad Club – Forest Hills

The Texas Western Model Railroad Club meets for its business meeting every 1st Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm. The Club is located at 6808 Forest Hills Drive, Forest Hills, TX. For more information: (682) 587-2092 or [www.twmrc.org](http://www.twmrc.org) or email [cdo@twmrc.org](mailto:cdo@twmrc.org).

## EVENTS AND SHOWS

### January 2023

21<sup>st</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> (Dallas) **Dallas Area Train Show.** (Sponsored by the North Texas Council of Railroad Clubs). Sat. 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, Sun. 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Adults \$10, Children 12 and under Free. "Cash and credit cards accepted at the door." Plano Civic Centre, 2000 E Spring Creek Parkway, Plano, TX. More information: <https://www.dfwtrainshows.com/>

### February 2023

18<sup>th</sup> (Houston) **The Greater Houston Train Show.** (Sponsored by the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club). Sat. 10:00 am to 4:30 pm. Adults \$5 for individuals 13 and older, Children under 12 are free. There is a \$10 maximum charge per family. Pasadena Convention Center, 7902 Fairmont Parkway, Pasadena, TX. More information: <http://sanjacmodeltrains.org/>

25<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> (San Antonio) **Jamboree & Train Show.** (Sponsored by SAMRA). Sat. 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. Sun. 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. "Admission and parking are always free." City of Garden Ridge Community and Events Center, 9500 Municipal Pkwy, Garden Ridge, TX. For more information: <https://samratx.org/>.

## EXCURSION TRAIN TRIPS

**Austin Steam Train;** Cedar Park, TX; (512) 477-8468; [www.austinsteamtrain.org](http://www.austinsteamtrain.org)

**Grapevine Vintage Railroad;** Grapevine, TX; (817) 410-3185; [www.gvrr.com](http://www.gvrr.com)

**Old Hickory Railroad;** Jackson, LA; (225) 634-7397; [www.louisianasteamtrain.com](http://www.louisianasteamtrain.com)

**Texas State Railroad;** Palestine & Rusk, TX; (888) 987-2461; [www.texasstaterr.com](http://www.texasstaterr.com)

Please consider our deadlines for submittals and publications to allow adequate lead time to correctly announce your event – upcoming column submission deadlines are the 15th of January, March, May, July and October. Publication of the *Marker Lamp* is the middle of the following month.

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# Help Save the Crescent Lines!



The Crescent City Model Railroad Club in Metairie, Louisiana needs your help to raise funds for a new roof to replace the current one that was damaged during Hurricane Ida on August 29, 2021. A neighbor's roof came off his home and blew over our building causing multiple holes in our roof and causing water damage inside of our building. In addition to that, another neighbor's tree fell on the back corner of the building causing more damage and leaks. Please donate at the Go Fund Me page:

<https://gofund.me/a96d6a2b>



# Please Donate at Go Fund Me



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# Whose track goes there?

Can you figure out whose layout this photo is from? If you are the first person to email the correct answer to [rrduino@huntatrophy.com](mailto:rrduino@huntatrophy.com) you'll win a campfire lighting Arduino!



# Creating a New Layout Room

## New Construction Presents Promise - and Pitfalls

by Don Winn

**W**hile I know a great many modelers do fantastic work with a spare bedroom, I was hoping that my final dream home would have an awesome train room. If I was going to dream, why not dream big, right? However, we didn't yet know the location for our home search – it hinged on where my daughter's family was going to relocate.

### Basements preferred

As potential job offers rolled in for my son-in-law, my wife would jump on the Zillow website to start shopping for our house in that area. I had her screening for full basements, preferably walk-out basements to make it easy to bring in materials. I've been to plenty of layouts that took over the second floor of a house, so that was a possible alternative choice, but often those had many limitations due to stairways, load bearing walls, and many divided-up rooms.

My wife was thinking in terms of a separate out-building for the layout, although I would prefer something attached. To be able to stroll into the layout room without getting dressed for the weather or turning on the heater or cooling in advance was certainly a plus for me. I'm convinced one can make more progress if it's easy to pop into the layout room even for a few minutes to get something glued – or just to assess what's next.

### The risk of adding a big room

Building a house with a large train room brings on a risk of not being able to repurpose the space later to re-sell the house. Maybe that's a problem for my heirs to deal with, but I took it on as an additional constraint. How does one build a custom home in a way that the train room could be easily repurposed into another function?

Many modelers make good use of garages here in Texas, and in other non-basement states like California and Florida. I started thinking of ratcheting that up a step.

### Giga-garage?

What about having a normal two- or three-car garage for the cars (plus bikes, mowers, etc.) and then another garage



on a different side of the house just for the railroad? Still thinking big, a five-car garage would be about 1,000 square feet. I would have the house structure framed for all five garage-door openings, but then put clapboard siding over most of them in a depot-style motif (see drawings page 10).

Think that's too much garage to resell? Advertise a house with an eight-car garage and see how many car guys come to look at it – it's an easy sell. I'm not a car guy anymore, but if I were house shopping, I would have to at least go and look at any house with an eight-car garage.

Taking the speculative garage plan another step, I looked at trimming out one of the center garage doors into a bay window to continue the depot theme. Inside that area would be a small work bench and dispatcher's office. I would keep one of the garage doors usable but trimmed as a freight/baggage door.

### Sectional thinking

While waiting for resolution of the location question I was also reading about sectional layout ideas, especially David Barrow's Domino system of home layout construction, which made a lot of sense to me. The ability to complete the wiring—and even the scenery—at your workbench rather than on the layout sounded very appealing. The ability to build some sections at my present home and then move

them to my new future layout seemed like a very sensible plan, so I decided to start building something that could be readily moved and set up in my new house – wherever that may be.

David Barrow built most of his dominoes as 2'X4' flat-topped rectangles, reasoning that this was a good size for carrying to the workbench. Most modular clubs use a similar size because they fit into most vehicles. I wanted to go longer to minimize the number of joints and have more freedom on where turnouts could be placed.

I considered eight-foot-long sections, but I was concerned about maneuvering them through the new house. Turning a corner in a hallway (particularly at the top or bottom of a stairway) might prove to be impossible; and I didn't want to discover that after I had spent a lot of time in building sections. I used my mother's basement stairs as a thought experiment on how to navigate a tricky combination of steep stairs and corners. After some pondering, I decided that 6'8" was a good maximum length for the sections. (That's the height of a standard doorway.)

In tight spaces, the section could be tilted up on end and slid through just about any challenging doorways. (Later when I knew the details of my new house I did build some sections to the 8' length).

### Hometown favorite

By this time, I had firmly settled on a prototype and a location. Aurora, Illinois was the birthplace of the Burlington Route, and coincidentally was also my hometown. My father, grandmother and other relatives had worked for "the Q" over the years.

Aurora was also the home to many large manufacturers, mostly metal fabricators who were rail served. Heavy equipment manufacturers included Caterpillar, Barber-Greene, and Austin-Western. Other heavy metal workers included Lyon Metal, All-Steel, Equipto, Richards-Wilcox, and Stephens-Adamson, in addition to dozens of small industries that may only take a few cars per month.

Aurora still anchors the famous triple "racetrack" into Chicago, plus we had all of those great-looking Zephyrs going through town. I set the era at the late sixties, before the Burlington Northern merger. I'm too young to remember steam, so first- and second-generation diesel power is fine.

### A compact preview

If this sounds familiar, I discussed my vision in a Switching Layout Challenge design. In that plan, I shrunk down all of my railroad empire to fit into a small bedroom – and now here I am, expanding it back out again by a factor of 10. Just as I finished writing that article, I had put down a deposit on a property to build my new layout room.

At an NMRA national convention a few years back, I became acquainted with Byron Henderson and Seth Neumann at their Layout Design Bootcamp clinic. I listened

intently for four hours, drank the Kool-Aid, and became a true believer. I even went back and attended the same clinic the next year, it's that good. (Visit [www.layoutvision.com](http://www.layoutvision.com) for a 3-page handout from this clinic). Armed with a new thought process, I went back and refined a number of details on my plan to fill in some missing gaps per the Conceptual Phase and Structural Phase.

### Conceptual Phase helps with focus

The process is great for funneling your plan into a layout that will accomplish your goals. Another benefit I learned over time is that a clearly defined and detailed vision saves a lot of money. If we stopped before buying that next loco or car and assesses if it makes sense on the prototype in the time frame, most of us really don't need 99% of what's out there.

Even great bargains on eBay or at train shows are not great bargains if that item isn't going to have a realistic place on the layout. On the other hand, I could use a lot of Burlington GP7s, almost a dozen Zephyr train sets, an Empire Builder, and a North Coast Limited consist, so my shopping did have some specific goals.

I planned for a double-deck layout, plus a third lower level for staging. The main level would be a switching-focused layout covering the industries in Aurora, including Montgomery at the south end of Aurora and Eola Yard at the east end. The upper deck would incorporate about six suburban stops on the way to Chicago.

After finally bowing to the many suggestions that I was taking on too much of a project, I later put the entire upper deck into the "future expansion" category. That required an adjustment to the location where staging tied into east end of the railroad, but it was conceptually a pretty easy change.

See below for a high-level schematic overlaid on a scale road map of northern Illinois as well as a detailed look at the operations map of Aurora, which shows where most of the switching will take place on the layout.



Don's Aurora Division Prototype

## Generic planning

Still, my detailed track planning at that time was stalled out to just “what-ifs”. I had plenty of sketches and CAD drawings (3rd PlanIt) for various generic room sizes. If I was looking at a 2,500 sq. ft. house which might be two stories, it should leave a full basement of at least 1,250 sq. ft. I fixed my initial sketches on 1,000 sq. ft. arranged as a 25’X40’ rectangular space. Although I knew that I tend to fixate on the rectangles instead of the space, I didn’t spend much time on drawing a curvy stylish design. Without knowing the final room shape, it didn’t make sense to get into that level of detail.

My alternative five-car garage version of the layout, however, did get developed into more specific detail (below). It included the bay window, plus a freight door that could be used to bring in large material. It was a fun and interesting exercise but wasn’t something I could yet take any action on.

## One thing won’t change

The only part of the layout I felt confident would not have to change is my major yard in Eola, IL. The Burlington took on a major project in 1922 to elevate the tracks to eliminate congestion and accidents in downtown Aurora. Readers may have seen the elevation and “new” depot / division office in a well-publicized photo of the 1934 speed run of the first Zephyr.

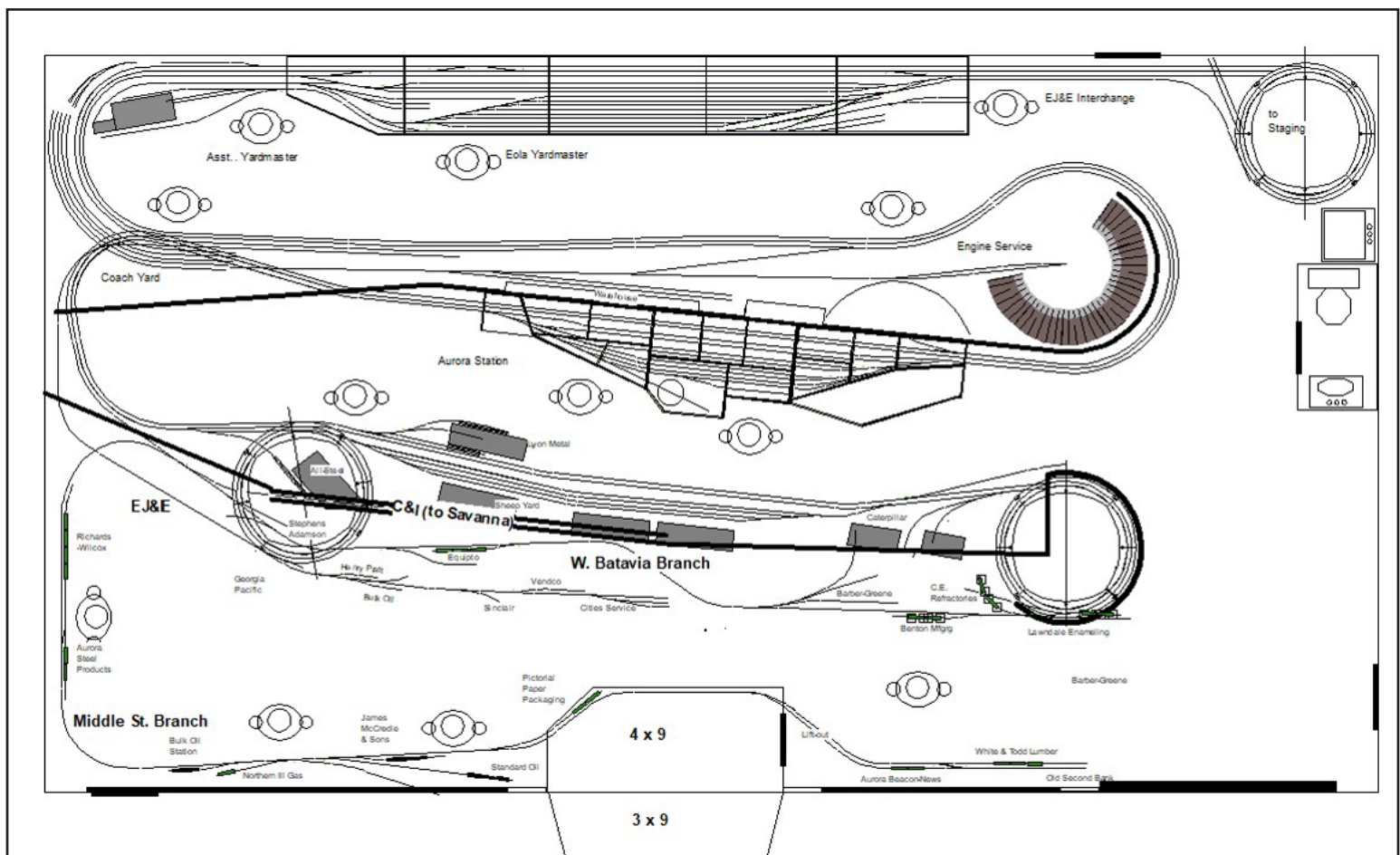
The Aurora Shop area was not significantly affected by the realignment, but the division yard was moved out of downtown a few miles east of Aurora to a tiny burg called Eola. The Eola yard operated as two separate yards on either side of the triple-track main. The north side of the main, known at the West Yard (based on direction of travel) receives trains coming out of Chicago, while the East Yard handles trains coming from “Everywhere West” back toward Chicago.

I had already decided that my layout would adopt the most-common direction orientation, with east to the right. From the maps pinned to the walls as early as grade school we all had it ingrained in us that north is at the top and east is always to the right. It’s easiest if builders and operators don’t need to rewire our brains on that one.

BNSF still operates the Eola yard, with the configuration largely unchanged over the years. Noticeable changes are the removal of all the structures, replaced by a new yard office. Gone are the roundhouse, coaling towers, water tanks, and other service facilities in the West Yard. The most obvious omission from the East Yard is the big reclamation facility.

## Making Eola fit

To compress the yard down to a modelable size, I lopped off the West yard, focusing on the East yard only. That put the triple main against the backdrop, the arrival/departure tracks



*The “Five Car Garage” Concept Track Plan*

next, and the classification tracks closest to the aisle.

Most experienced modelers recommend a maximum of 30" deep for a scene to allow for reasonable reach of the average person. I decided to stretch that to 36" for the yard, considering that the mains should not often require manual intervention (ideally). That left more depth for the classification tracks.

I drew on what I had learned about yard design, including Craig Bisgeier's 10 Commandments of Yard Design ([www.housatonicrr.com/yard\\_des.html](http://www.housatonicrr.com/yard_des.html)). Based on my operating experience, I think that providing an uninterrupted yard lead track is perhaps one of the most essential of those ideas.

My first design also included a yard office, scale track, caboose track, and switcher track within the yard. The loco servicing was over in the West Yard (the one I omitted) on the prototype, so on my layout I will model the diesel-servicing facilities in the Aurora Shops area.

I got some guidance from Travers Stavac to reduce the complexity of the yard design. Dean Ferris, noted N-scale modeler and former yardmaster, recommended taking out the three dedicated arrival/departure tracks in favor of more general-use classification tracks. I ended up keeping the look and designation of the separate arrival/departure tracks but redesigned the turnout placement to allow them to function as optional classification tracks as needed.

### Black Friday house shopping

Our purchase of a train room (and house!) happened quickly. My son-in-law accepted a position as assistant professor at UT-San Antonio. Finally, we had a decision on location, although there was no rush. Our youngest still had two more years to finish high school in our current location.

My daughter hosted Thanksgiving their first year in San Antonio and we decided to head out on Black Friday to look at open houses. Now, I have bought a number of interesting things on Black Friday, but never a house. After only a few hours of driving around and looking at model homes, we found a property in a custom home development (new construction - check!) (customizable for a train room - check!), that was only 10 minutes away (less than 15 minutes from my daughter - check!), and was directly adjacent to a future extension of San Antonio's incredible hike & bike trail system (walk in the woods - check!). As a bonus, we would have no neighbors behind us - nothing but a view.

Neither I nor my wife is typically impulsive on things, especially something this important. But I wanted to put down a deposit on one of the greenway lots before they got away. I collected up all two dozen or so floor plans from the two competing builders and stayed up most of that night doodling on them to figure which floor plan would be best to fit in a train room.

Basements aren't generally built in Texas due to the shifting clay soil and San Antonio is host to 14 limestone



*A model railroader looks at an empty lot and thinks, "Train Room!" Photos by author.*

quarries, one of them being very close to this neighborhood, so no basements here. In fact, there was almost no dirt on the lot - just solid rock.

We could have built a two-story, but we considered that we aren't getting any younger. Even a minor mobility issue in the future would put the second floor out of reach, literally. One floor it is.

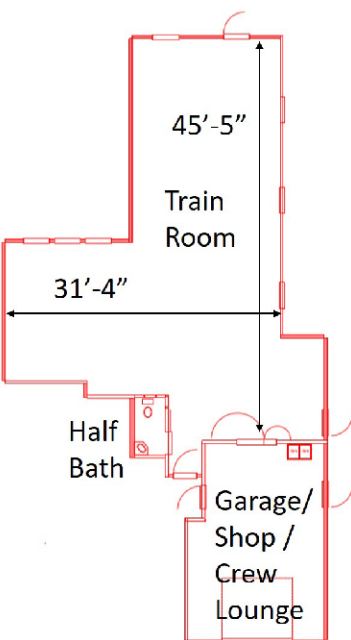
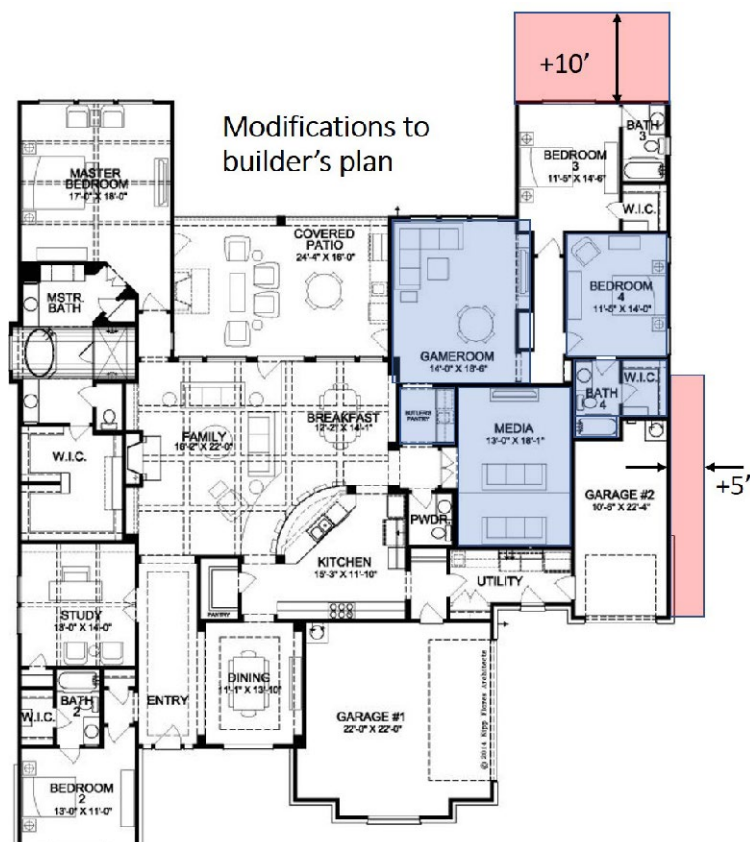
The housing development we had found is one where four bedrooms seemed to be the norm. Gee, that sounds nice, but the plans were much more house (and \$) than I had planned. Adding on a train room of significant size probably wouldn't fit on the lot (and would certainly further blow way past my budget) so I started look at trading some of that floor space for more train room.

Starting with the designated game room, I eliminated bedroom #4, bathroom #4, the media room (would I rather watch movies or trains?) and wet bar area. Using that square footage and then rearranging the utility room, bedroom #3, and bathroom #3 gave me a nice L-shaped room of over 1,000 sq. ft. I also moved the half bath adjacent to the train room (see next page).

It looked like it would work so we went back the next day and put down a deposit on our preferred lot. My builder gave us ten days to confirm the plan and architectural changes we wanted. Talk about time pressure!

The timing of the building this house was a significant concern of its own. We wanted to stick to our plan to not move until our son had graduated from high school, an event that was 18 months away. The builder's goal, however, was to get the house built as quickly as possible to make a profit on that lot.

They said the house would be built in 5-6 months. I now know this must be some goal that they never meet...I haven't seen them build any houses in less than a year. We suggested that since most buyers wanted their house right away, they



*Don's modifications to the builder's floor plan and the final train room/shop arrangement*

could shuffle them to the top of the list and let ours slide. In the end, it was nine months from putting down the deposit to actually putting up forms for the foundation, and then another seven months to build the house - 16 months total.

There was some back and forth, but in the end I got the house plan customized to about 99% of what I wanted. Awesome! Built there was a catch - the builder did not think a house with a 1,000 sq. ft. train room would be easy for

him to sell should we back out of the deal for any reason. To eliminate his risk, we had to carry the construction financing, which meant we owned it as soon as construction started. It was a hassle, but it wasn't going to deter me.

### Seeking help

After a long time of nonspecific planning, things were moving really fast – too fast! I decided that I needed to pull in a professional consultant immediately. I had already been corresponding with Byron Henderson, LDJ editor and professional layout designer.

I sent Byron the builder's floor plan along with my take on cutting-and-pasting rooms. He said he was pretty busy, but he could squeeze in a few hours that next week to look at my plans and give some feedback.

As I recall, when we finally got together on the phone, Byron said "Don, my first question is: four bathrooms?! Really? Really?!!" I like Byron's sense of wit. He reminded me to take a breath and enjoy the process. (Actually, Byron, the builder's original plan had 4½ baths, and I trimmed it down to 3½ – so there!)

### Let's keep it within the walls, OK?

I was trying to stay within the outer dimensions of the builder's plan to hopefully minimize the cost of my custom changes and minimize potential construction issues (and mistakes). The house plan incorporated a two-car garage along with a separate one-car garage. I really liked this layout.

My prior three-car garages had been a combined space which included my saws and other tools. As a result, everything was coated with sawdust. The other advantage of separate spaces is minimizing the up and down of the overhead doors to keep the temperature controlled when working.

I designated the one-car garage as my shop area. The builder had an optional upgrade in the plan to make the garage 5' wider, which I jumped at. That would allow space for workbenches and saws against each wall, while still allowing for a car to squeeze in if our son stayed with us after high school. When there isn't a car in residence, I can set up large work tables in the open space.

The wider garage put us right on limit of the build line to fit the width of the house on the property, so there was no more room there to expand the train room in width. But I could go 14' longer on the train room before I hit the build limit front-to-back.

Byron and I agreed that the L-shaped room is good, and that longer is better. I ended up extending the long dimension of the room by ten feet (about 160 sq. ft.) to help fit in a longer Eola yard. I stopped four feet short of the absolute limit, thinking that it was then big enough (what was I thinking?! – more is always better!), as I didn't want to wipe out one of my few remaining trees.

## Footprint alternatives

Byron created a few different layout options for discussion, such as the example shown here. I think my key take-away from this process was not so much focused on a specific plan, but a realization that the room size and shape should be able to support a broad range of approaches.

One of my givens was for a walk-in layout with no duckunders. I wanted operators to be able to follow their train along the main track without obstacles. I was willing to accept a duckunder or lift out to access the branch lines if the operator only had to cross the main once to get to his work area.

One thing the layout designs revealed is that I needed enough space at the end of the long run to accommodate a turnback loop or helix. I added more length to the 5' bump-out from the shop to address that need. This was a critical decision to make very early in the process before the final house-purchase contract and pricing were signed-off. (At this writing, the helix has been built and fits great in that corner).

## Finalizing house details

The toughest part of getting the floor plan completed was the corner where the train room and shop connect to the rest of the house. It took much iteration with the builder's architect to get something workable with the hallway and all the doorways. Nothing germane to trains, but since I was playing architect (like my inspiration, George Costanza), it was one of those nagging details that I wanted to stay on until it was right.

With house dimensions agreed-to, we turned to finalizing the details of the house. While my wife concentrated on all of the flooring, lighting, kitchen, and bath options, I focused on the detailing out the train room and shop. I spec'ed-out the shop with quad AC outlets every four feet. No, I don't need that much power, but I couldn't be sure where I would need it until everything was set up.

## AC for the layout

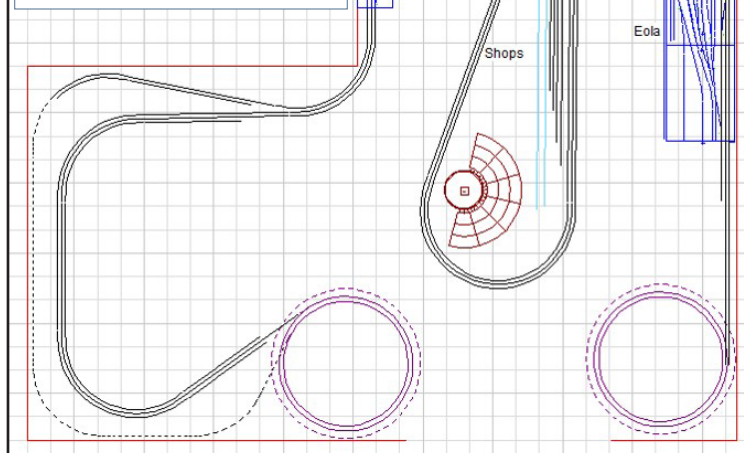
These outlets, along with four strategically placed floor outlets, are "half-hots", meaning one outlet of each duplex is powered all the time and the other is switched. As I built up the benchwork away from the walls I mounted surge protectors near the aisles, but all are hooked to the switched power.

For the switched outlets, I ended up with three switches that I upgraded myself to switches that light up when powered (photo to right). When I leave the room I can quickly verify that all railroad track power is off, so locos are not powered up (or burning up).

That also includes any tools like soldering irons, glue guns and other items that I don't want to accidentally leave on. I use the constant power side of the outlets only

*Byron Henderson explored different potential room arrangements, layout footprints, and design emphases based on Don's conceptual ideas and potential space.*

*Note that except for the sections under construction (in blue) there is very little detail in this sketch, which is an example of planning during the "Structural" phase.*



for battery chargers and household appliances like TV, radios, and the like. It's a good safety measure that I would recommend.

## Lights and refreshments

I specified switched outlets in the ceiling for my future installation of shop lights. LED lighting pricing has come down to where it was the right choice – I made a good call on that. With ten 4' LED tube-style lights, I have enough lumens in there now to do surgery. My eyes are getting old – I need the light. I also requested hookups for putting a large refrigerator out there as well as plumbing connections for a sink. We put a man-door in the side of the shop to be egress for letting the dog in, but that is not used. I found that



it is more useful for creating crossflow ventilation when I'm painting.

### Additional access

I also added an exterior entrance door to the train room so that my railroad friends can come and go without passing through the rest of the house. I put it all the way in the corner of the room to maintain the maximum walkaround space. My wife's favorite part of the train room design is that "what happens in the train room stays in the train room." And the lock on the door between the train room and the rest of the house keeps it that way.

Having all three entry/egress doors (exterior door, shop door, house door) clustered at one end of the train room helped maintain the walk-in layout goal but wasn't much good for an alternative fire escape. To address that, I added another exterior door at the far end of the room. My plan is that space will be left open to crawl under the tracks in front of the door to get out. My wife is lobbying for a lift out there – a future design consideration.

### Crew lounge? Or more layout?

What about a crew lounge? It's always a tradeoff – giving up layout floor space for a crew lounge. With the shop in the next room, I decided to preserve only a small entry foyer area in the train room, instead using the shop for the crew lounge. I'll have to vacuum up the sawdust before any big events and put out some chairs, but that's easy. It's a big air-conditioned room – and it has the refrigerator from our old kitchen, so we're all set with cold beverages. I think it will be more than adequate.

Similarly, I looked all the places in the layout room where I could spot a dispatcher who moonlights as a contortionist, but nothing seemed reasonable. He will have a temporary desk, computer, and phone out in a corner of the shop near the overhead door.

I may put up a curtain to minimize the distractions from the lounging crew. This was another good decision to plan out early. I requested the installation of Ethernet cable from that corner to a spot in the train room. This cable is not connected to the home's router – it's just a dedicated cable to connect into the C/MRI (Computer/Model Railroad Interface) system I have planned.

### Layout lighting

The train room was built with four fan/lights for basic lighting. To that I added switched junction boxes at strategic locations in the ceiling for future LED track lighting. That was a good move also. I was able to do my own installation using parts readily available at Home Depot, choosing 5000K daylight bulbs.

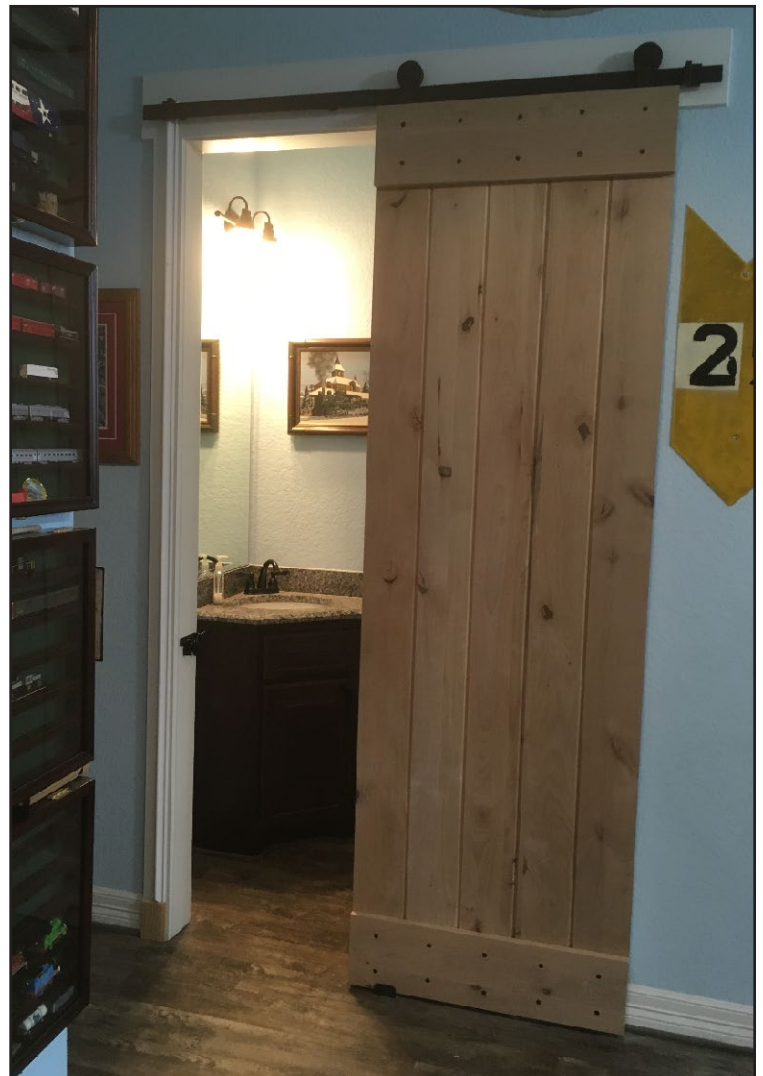
The house design has a mix of 10' and 12' ceilings. One surprise was that I was expecting 10' ceilings in the train room, but once framing started I found that I had 12' ceilings.

Not a bad problem, except for installing my track lights by myself. The tall ceiling almost calls for a complete design change to a mushroom design – hmm. I thought about it briefly, but it didn't look like a good fit with the other givens of the plan.

### Bathroom born in a barn?

I had squeezed down the dimensions of the train room's half-bath to fit it in. But then I discovered that I couldn't get an inward-opening door to fit, even using a minimal corner sink. An outward-opening door would be in the way of the layout. Sliding barn doors are all the rage now on those home improvement shows, so we went with that.

The trick is how to create a reasonable privacy seal, but my daughter helped me mount well-placed trim to eliminate any sight angles. And, hey, a barn door kind of looks like a boxcar door. I specified roller hardware that looks most boxcar-like (photo below). The rest is a future décor project for another day.



*To save space, Don used a sliding barn-style door for the half-bath in the layout room. Strategic molding placements helped eliminate any unwelcome sightlines.*

## Walls and floor

We're using that new vinyl planking flooring in much of the house. I decided to use the same material for the train room floor but picked a more rustic wood look. I had the walls and ceilings painted Sherwin-Williams Soar color. I picked that by holding paint chips up to the sky on a particular day.

It looked a little too blue in the finished empty room, but I think it will be fine. I didn't think to specify smooth vs. textured walls and ended up with them textured by default. Something to think about next time, but I think that may be OK also.

## Floor plan to track plan

Now that I had committed to the floor plan, I was working every day on versions of the layout design in 3rd PlanIt. In the SIG room at one of the national conventions a few years ago, I was inspired by a 3-D cardboard model of someone's plans for a new layout. Given the complexity and the investment in this endeavor, I decided to build a G-scale mockup of the room and the layout. Using a common modeling scale allowed for a source of doors, windows, and figures to include in the model.

What I found is that it took far more time to build this model than I had initially thought. Also, it was difficult to realistically represent the complex trackwork to transition between levels. I had used poster board and cereal box cardboard and the levels were just too flimsy to hold their shape. I would suggest using a much stiffer cardboard – or maybe even a lauan plywood – if I were to do this again.

But despite those issues, it was reassuring to find that the plan still looked good and had no significant faults. In fact, it looked so good that it had me second-guessing that I must be missing something. But the plan still looks good. This analysis-paralysis ended once I moved in and started building.

Working to a deadline, I wanted to take the mock-up to the annual SIGs meet-up in Tulsa. I received a number of great suggestions about the layout design at the Meet. Relative to the house construction, one suggestion I acted on was to put in double doors between the shop and train room to allow wide material (at least 4') to be brought in.

## Unexpected construction issues

The standard house plan called for two HVAC units. To be able to control the train room separate from the other rooms on that side of the house, I specified a zone control to split that unit into two delivery areas – another good move.

One day during construction I came by and saw the thermostat wires coming out of the wall into an area of the future layout. When I asked the contractor to move it, he patiently explained that it had to be X feet away from the return duct, X feet away from the door, etc. Neither he nor my wife could clearly see, as I could, that the location of the



*Don used this double door to make it easier to bring large items into the layout room.*

thermostat would be right in the middle of the Caterpillar factory – either above the factory or perhaps inside of it.

We talked around it for a while. A thermostat shouldn't be placed inside of a bathroom, either, but since it had a normally open barn door, we reached that compromise. Much easier to catch it now than for me to try to move it or work around it later.

It's really best to keep checking construction progress every day. Even though I could stay with my daughter any time I wanted, living 300 miles away made that impractical given the demands of activities at the old house.

## Meet the neighbors

One day during construction I was standing in the train room, just checking things and getting excited about what the layout would look like. A neighbor I had not yet met wandered in and told me that he knows what's going on here and he's going to put a stop to it. So, I took the bait

and asked, "What's going on?" He pointed to the four floor outlets and said it was obviously that "this guy" was planning to put desks in here and run some kind of a business, with cars that would fill up the streets – and that is not allowed in this neighborhood. I told him that I was pretty sure "the guy" was planning to build a model railroad. The neighbor just looked at me like I was on drugs.

Other neighbors took their questions to the builder's saleswomen at the model home. They all got the answer, "Oh, that's Don. He's planning to build a model railroad." I became famous. Any time someone walked by the house they would say, "Oh, we know all about you. You're the railroad guy."

Once the house was finished and we had the keys, I was happy – both the train room and shop turned out great.

### Moving day at last

First order of business upon moving in was get both my garage and shop up and squared away. Getting the two-car garage fitted up with new shelves, pegboard, cabinets (from the old house) was a high priority just to get all the "stuff" put up. I've decided ... I'm *never* moving again (ever... I hope).

I contracted out to get an independent HVAC system installed in the shop. My friend Keith has one of those ductless systems for his two-car garage layout, so I went with that. I had the garage and garage doors fully insulated during construction, which makes a huge difference. Most days I don't need the HVAC at all if I leave the door open to the train room (which is served by the household HVAC).

I had the contractor plumb for a sink – I had planned on putting in a typical utility tub. But with my thrice-daily visits to Home Depot, I realized how inexpensively I could get a double-tub kitchen sink and cabinets. I had never installed kitchen sinks and cabinets, but those rookies do it on TV reality shows all the time. Actually, it wasn't that bad. The main challenge was getting the lower cabinets level on a sloped concrete floor. I decided to paint in CB&Q loco colors. The shop was all set up with everything except my future paint booth – now we're ready to do some serious benchwork.

The first section of benchwork started going up during Thanksgiving when I had my three kids around to help. This was two years to the day from when we found the lot on Black Friday. Long time coming.

### Challenge and reward

We'll close this chapter here for now (I plan to discuss the details of the layout design and the construction in a future article). Building a custom layout room was a real design and specification challenge. But for me, it was right in my wheelhouse. There were some challenges along the



*Three overall views above illustrate some of the features Don included in his layout space, including AC outlets in the ceiling and floor and the additional door in the back of the room.*

way, but yes, I would absolutely do it again. I ended up with a train room that is going to be great – the rest of the house is OK, too.

I will have to admit that many the great ideas I used to detail out the train room and shop were things I have picked up at layout tours or read about in the hobby press. Everyone in this hobby is happy to share their keys to success – there are no secrets. I'm pretty happy about how everything turned out – it's a great layout room. No complaints – how could I? **ML**

*This article originally appeared in the Layout Design Journal and was abridged and reprinted with their permission. The LDJ is a publication of the Layout Design Special Interest Group.*

*Check out [ldsig.org](https://ldsig.org) for more details.*



*Benchwork begins two years after the purchase of an empty lot.*



# Contest Results

Congratulations to everyone who entered - every single entry was outstanding!

Thank you to the staff who made this year's contest possible:

Ray Byer, Betty Mitchell, Jeff Palmer and Duane Richardson

## Diesel Locomotives

*Photos by Duane Richardson*



**First Place** | Mike Mackey, MMR - Amtrak #328



**Second Place** | Bradley Linda - GP-40 #9401



**Third Place** | Bradley Linda - GP-38 #1047

## Steam Locomotives



**NOVICE  
BEST IN  
SHOW**

**First Place** | Cole Rash - MDC Shay #4 "Daisy"



**Second Place** | Tom Greco - B&O C-16 0-4-0 Switcher

## Passenger Cars



**First Place** | Tom Greco - B&O RPO #47



**Second Place** | Tom Greco - Pullman Club Car



**Third Place** | Bradley Linda - St. Louis & Southwestern Bradley Chair Car

# Freight Cars



**First Place** | Lourdes McCleary - Pickle Car



**Second Place** | Lourdes McCleary - Skeleton Logging Car



**Third Place** | Russell Gifford - Speedy Reefer



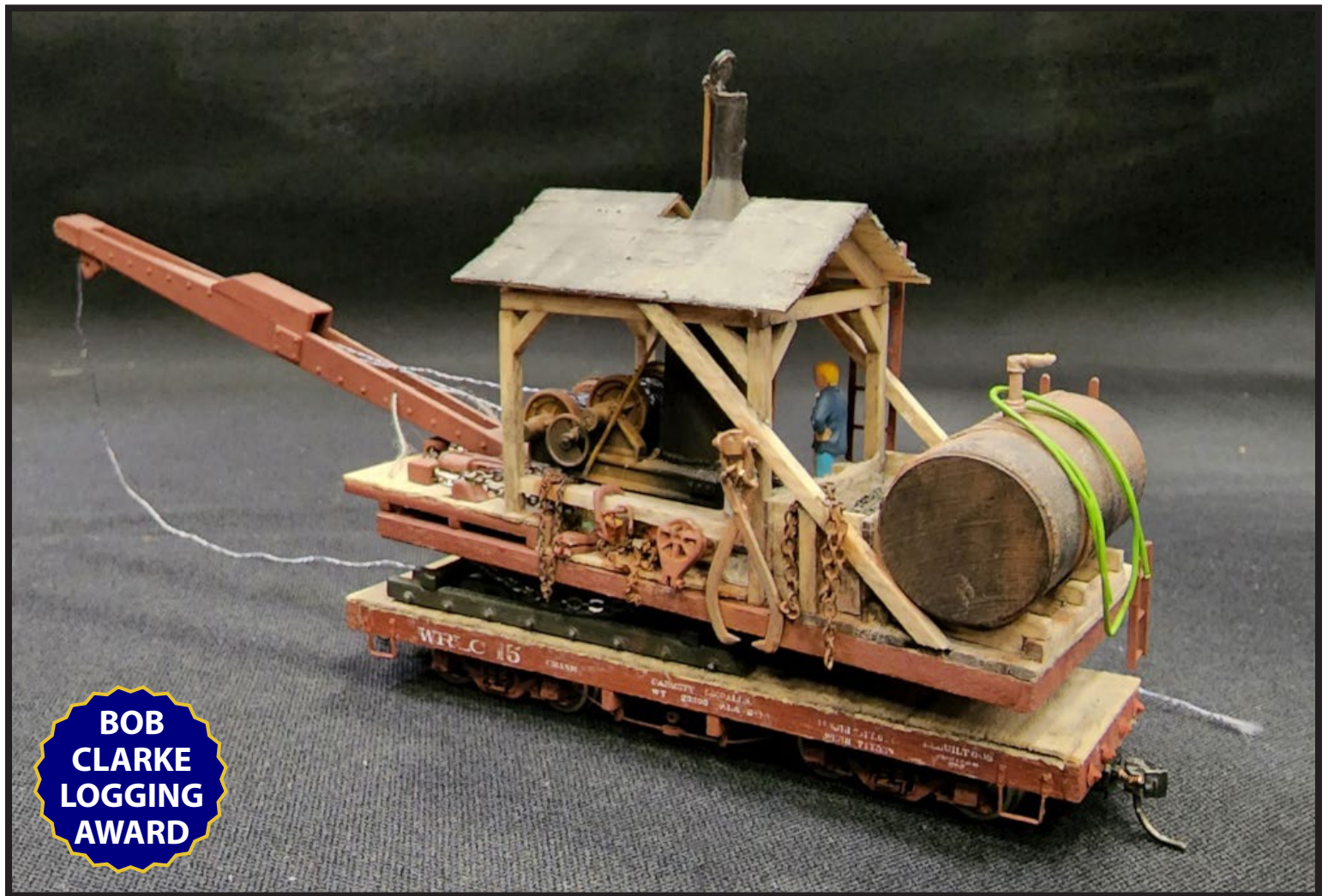
Mike Mackey, MMR - T&SL Narrow Gauge Train



**Lourdes McCleary**

3 Entries  
338 Points

# Maintenance of Way



**First Place** | Duane Richardson, MMR - Whiskey Ridge Logging Crane



# Cabooses



**First Place** | Bradley Linda - Cotton Belt ICC Wide-Vision Caboose



**Second Place** | Lourdes McCleary - Outside-Braced Caboose

# On-Line Structures



**First Place** | Lourdes McCleary  
Water Tank

**Second Place** | Al Boos, MMR  
Lenmore, Ca. Elevator





**MOST  
POPULAR**

**Third Place** | Russell Gifford - Victory Brewery

## Off-Line Structures



**First Place** | Russell Gifford - Small Town, USA

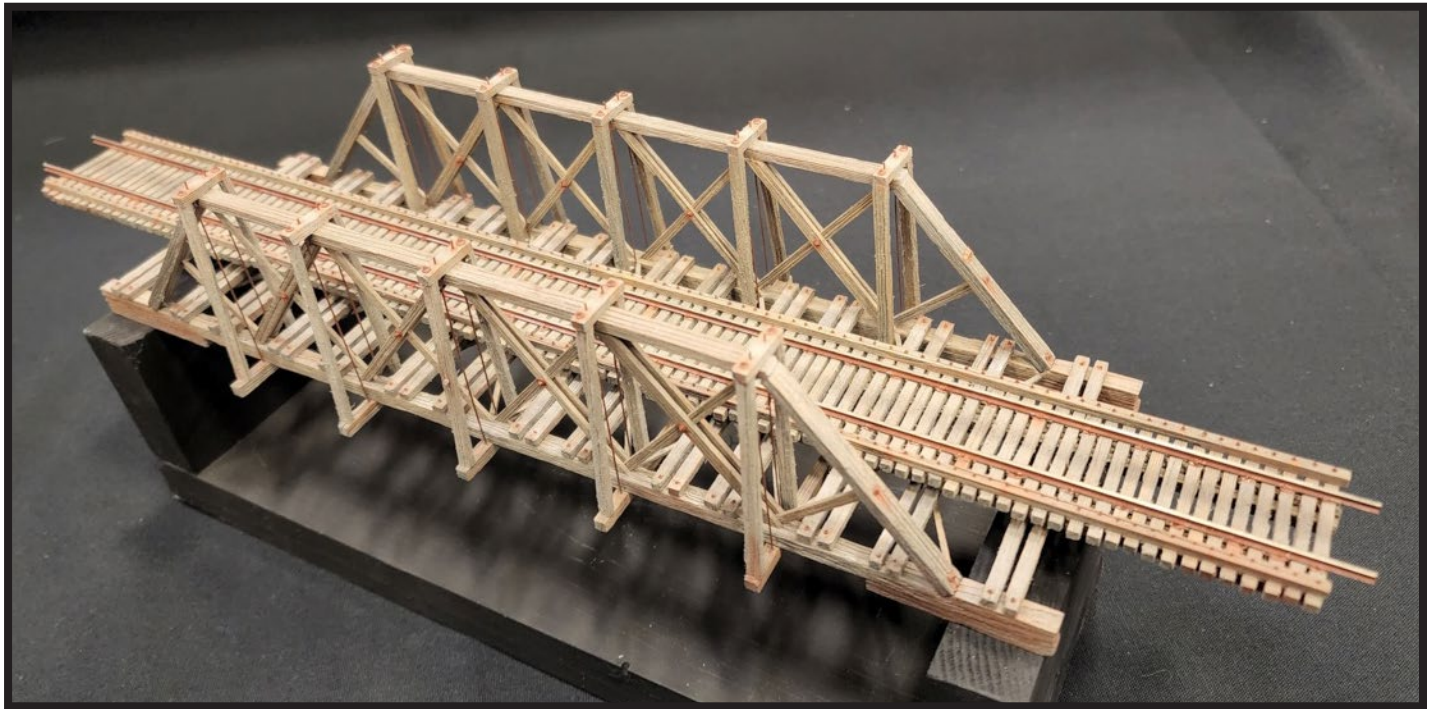


**Second Place** | Mike Mackey, MMR  
Philgas Production Platform

**Third Place** | Al Boos, MMR  
Naomi's Ristorante

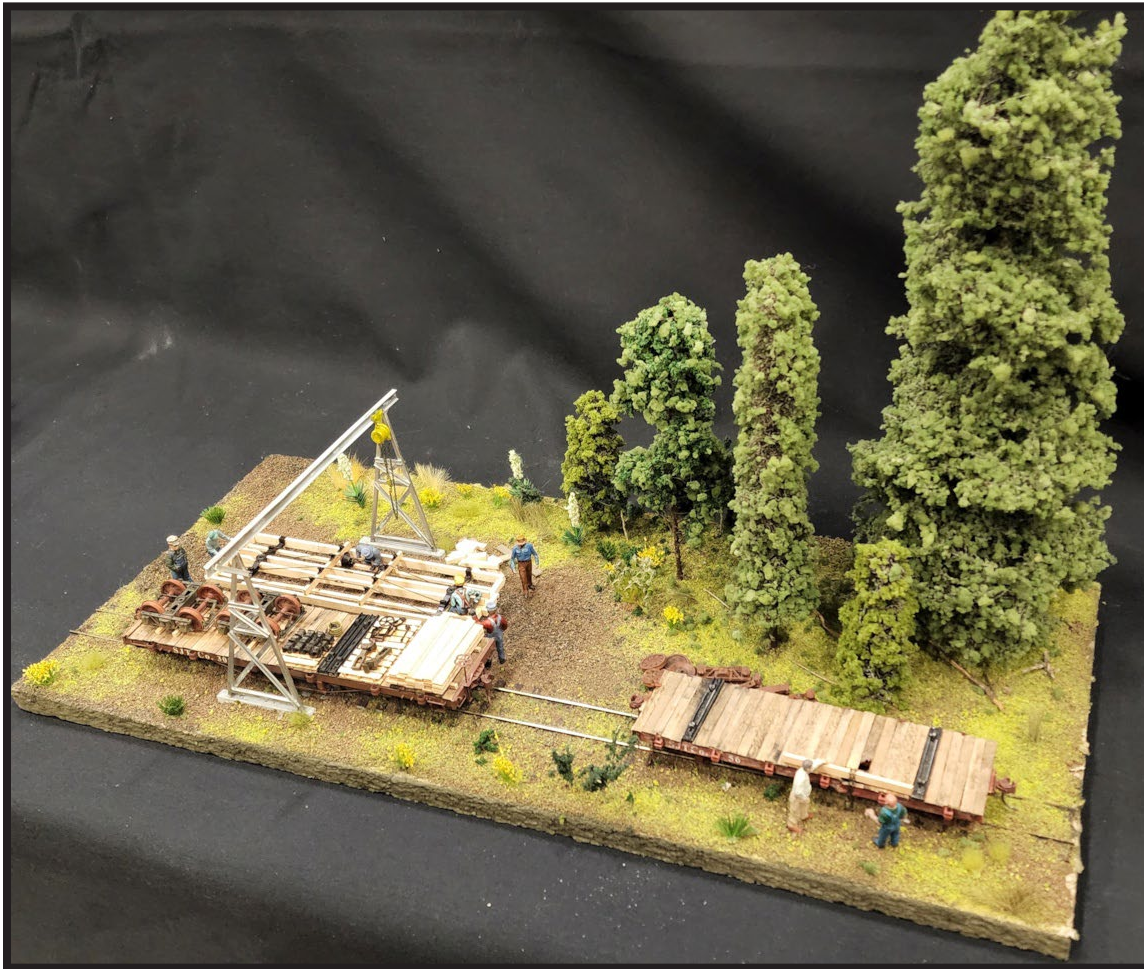


## Bridges and Trestles



**First Place** | Cole Rash - Pony Truss Bridge

## Displays / Modules



**First Place** | Charles Goodrich, MMR - Log Car: Cradle to Grave



**Second Place** | Russell Gifford - Black Hills Hunting Cabin

**Third Place** | Russell Gifford - Abandoned Steam Shovel

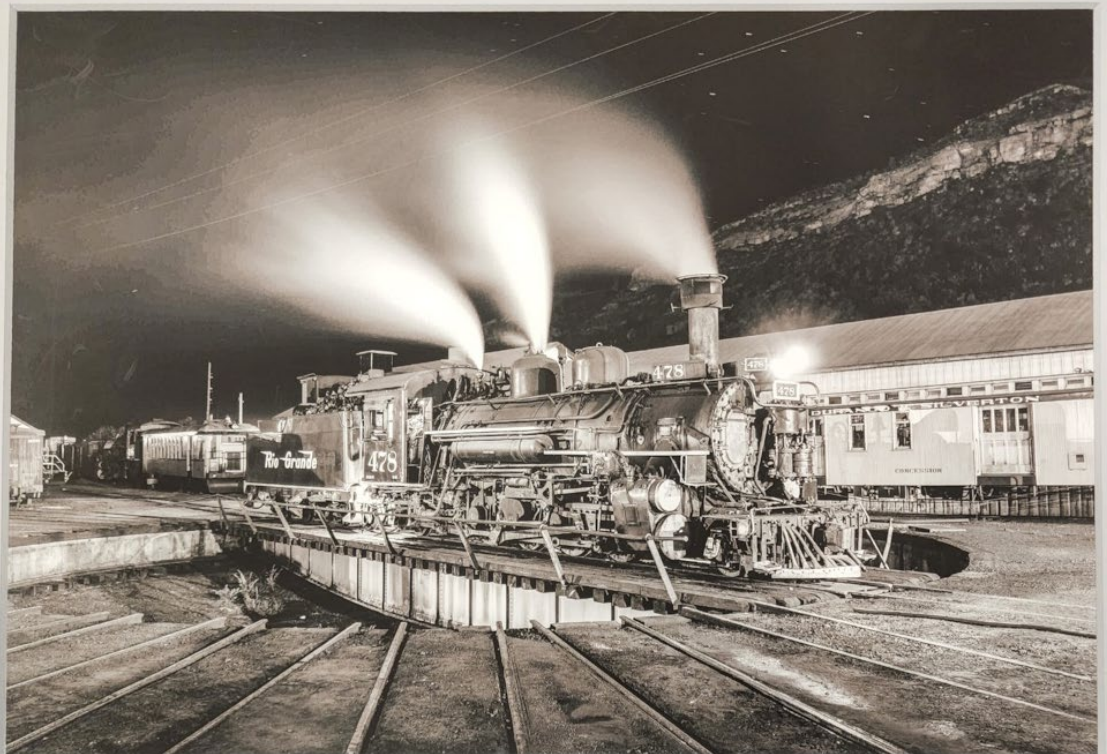


# Prototype Photography - Black & White

**First Place** | Duane Richardson, MMR  
Switching Chania



**Second Place** | Charles Goodrich, MMR  
D&RGW 478



**Third Place** | Charles Goodrich,  
MMR - Herber Railroad UP 618



## Prototype Photography - Color



PHOTOGRAPHY  
BEST IN  
SHOW

**First Place** | Charles Goodrich, MMR - D&RGW 478 on Durango Turntable



**Second Place** | Charles Goodrich, MMR - KCS Business Train



**Third Place** | Bradley Linda - Grinstein Surviving

# Model Photography - Black & White



**First Place** | Geoffrey Hagno - O'Neill's Fabrication Shop



**Second Place** | Geoffrey Hagno - Austria Town Model

# Model Photography - Color



**First Place** | Duane Richardson,  
MMR - Start Mine #1



**Second Place** | Geoffrey Hognó - Freight Delivery Depot



**Third Place** | Bradley Linda - TNW Local at DuPont



## Arts and Crafts - General

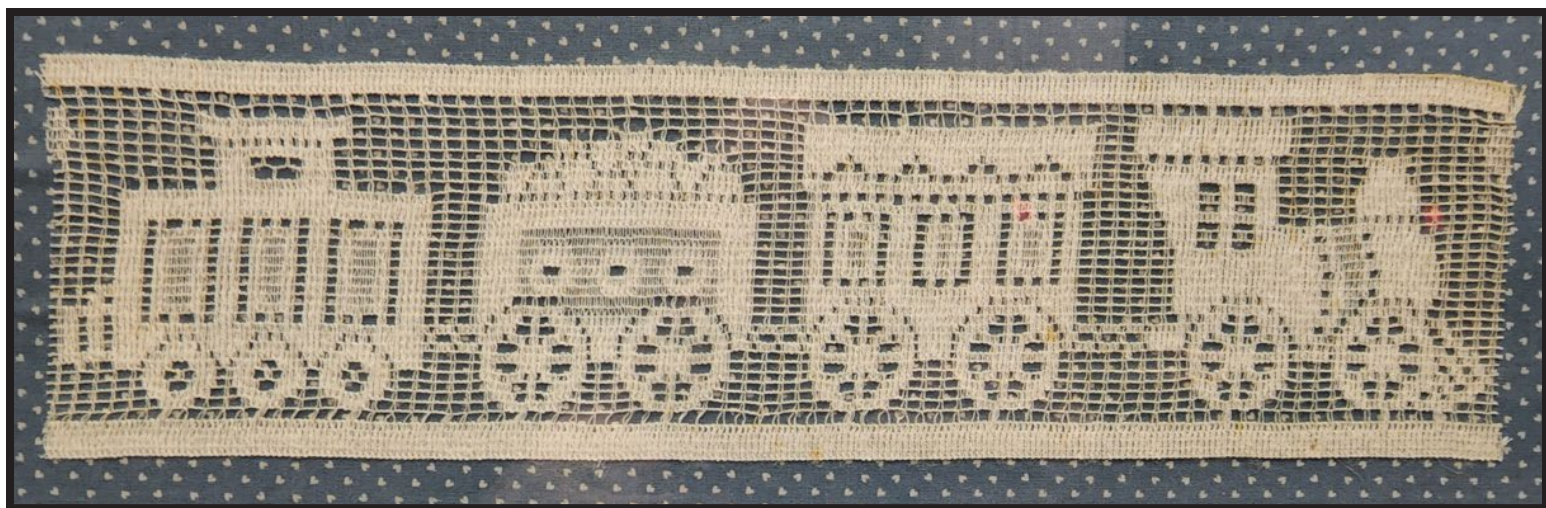


**First Place** | Divina Gato-Hogno  
Texas-Size Wine Glass

## Arts and Crafts - Railroadianna



**First Place** | Divina Gato-Hogno  
Railroad-Themed Shopping Bag



**Second Place** | Helen Beggane - Crochet Train

## Arts and Crafts - Needlework



**MOST  
POPULAR  
ARTS &  
CRAFTS**

**ARTS &  
CRAFTS  
BEST IN  
SHOW**

**First Place** | Helen Beggane - Christining Dress, Hat, and Robe



# *Wanted!*

## Nominees for the 2022 LSR Youth Award

- **Who:** Any boy or girl 18 years old or younger with an interest in model railroading
- **Where:** One nominee from each LSR Division
- **A past awardee:** May be renominated for another year if they meet the qualifications specified in the LSR Constitution. **Contact Chuck Lind**  
[chucklind46@gmail.com](mailto:chucklind46@gmail.com)

**How:** Fill out the special Youth Award Membership Form available on  
<http://www.lonestarregion.com/>

**When:** Submit your nomination to your LSR Division Director  
by **December 31, 2022.**

For more information contact:  
Chuck Lind, Youth Chairman: [chucklind46@gmail.com](mailto:chucklind46@gmail.com)



# The Oregon, California and Eastern Railway Co.

## Visiting the Colorado Model Railroad Museum

by John Garfield



**F**rom time to time I try to get a little story of one of my latest ventures for you to enjoy. My latest was to take a ride on the Rocky Mountaineer from Denver to Moab, Utah. Before taking this trip, Barry Gates and I went to Denver early on a Saturday morning and drove up to Greeley, Colorado to see the famous Oregon, California and Eastern. Michelle Kempema, Executive Director of the museum, came to our LSR District 1 meeting last January when in town and gave us a presentation on the railroad. This is my third visit to the railroad.

The empire was created by David G. Trussell and is documented in a very nice booklet, *The Colorado Model Railroad Museum*. Mr. Trussell was publisher of newspapers and had a childhood love of model trains. The OC&E was a

bridge route owned by the SP and GN railroads and later became part of the Weyerhaeuser Corporation in 1975.

My first time there was just a visit when it first opened. My second visit was part of a rail run in North Colorado when I had the opportunity to actually run an 88-car logging train to the summit, transfer empty cars from three locations and return with loaded cars. A real challenge that took about 3 hours.

Unfortunately, on my first visit I had a film-based camera and cannot find my pictures of the event, but this time I had a digital camera and was able to catch a lot of the scenery – which I will say is exquisite.

My first set of photos is from an observation deck at the back of the room on a second floor so you are looking



down on the layout that has to measure 40 X 60 (I'm only guessing the size but it is big [5,500 square feet, more than 80 scale miles of track! -Ed]). From there we progress around the layout and come back down the stairs and walk through the layout observing the scenery up close and the trains operating. This is on a Saturday, so there are several volunteers running trains throughout the layout.

The layout is best observed from the rear second floor observation deck where you can get a panoramic view of the layout and each area. Note the scale of this HO layout to one of the operators and you get an idea of how



*Just a close-up of a very well done stream area that the trains pass by. There are many special effects and detailed areas from factories to cities to countryside.*

big this is. Also note the movable stand to the left of the photo to reach the upper parts. There are also duck under areas where the concrete floor is cut about 2' lower so that one can pass from one area to another under the layout. Note the caboose in the rear to get some scale of this huge layout.

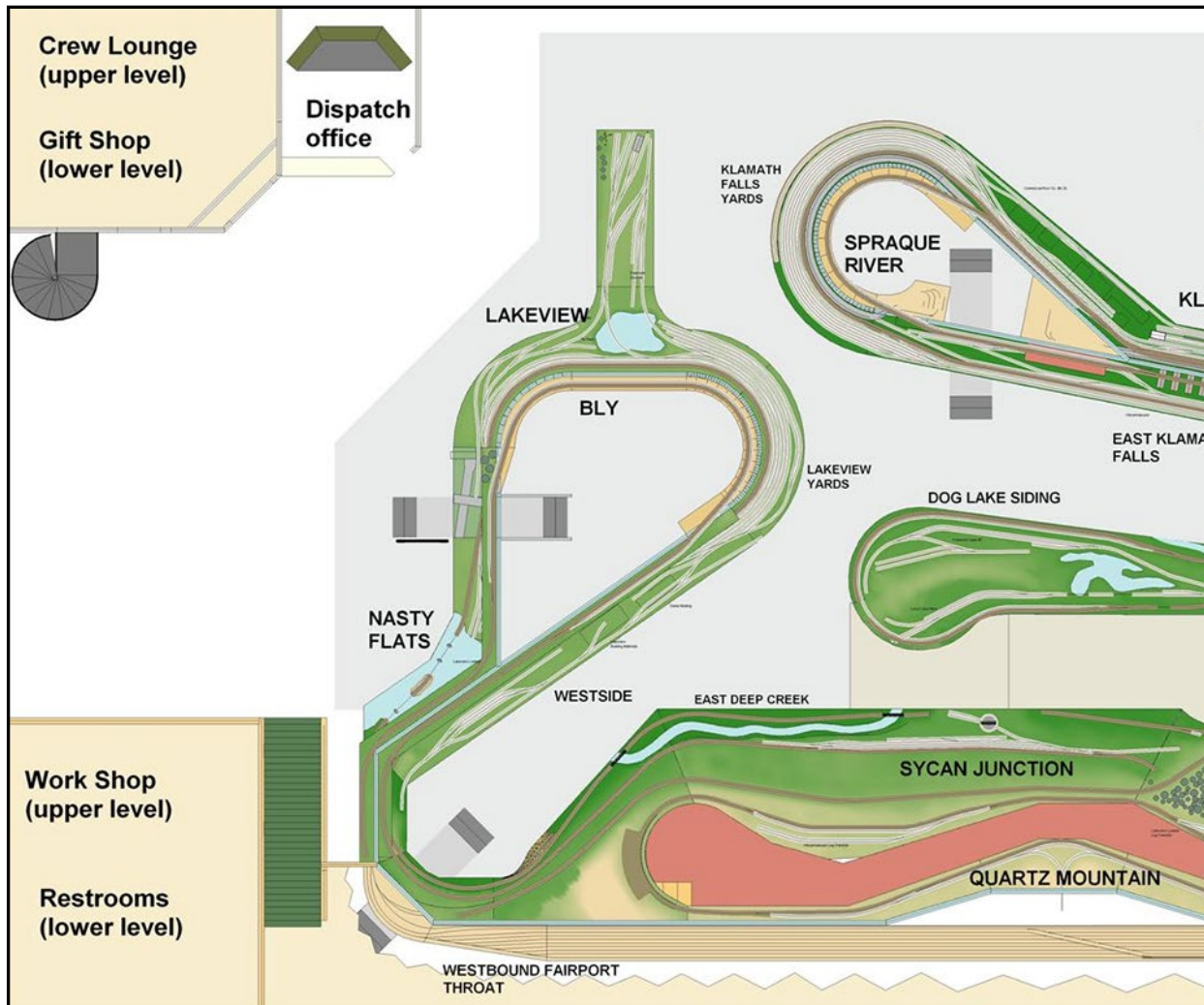
The layout is enjoyed by the young and the old, male or female. I think everyone has their breath taken away when they first enter the room and don't know where to go next. There is so much detail everywhere – you have to walk it to really see the detail and take in the work that it took to create this.

Photos just don't do justice to this exhibit and layout. You have to go see it to really appreciate the size and detail of it all from ports with sawmills to mountain terrain.

Being a Saturday, the place was full of observers like me but in talking with the chief operator of the system, I got permission to go to the back staging area under the second level observation deck and see how trains are stored for operation. The whole thing works very well and is a great place to visit if you are in northern Colorado. **ML**

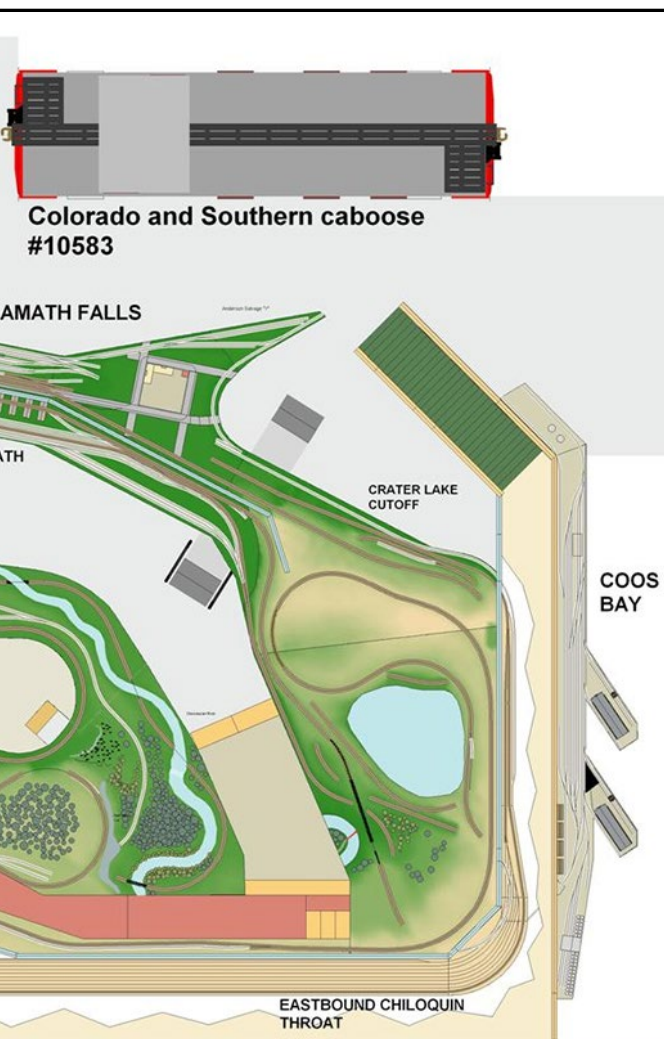


*This island area is to the left near the front door.*





*This is one of the really good features that I enjoyed. This trestle is expertly done and is about 7 feet off the floor (to give you an idea of the size of all of this). To the left is a forest fire that actually generates smoke when you push a button. Very nicely done.*



*Further around the layout to the back is a port area - Coos Bay - with a couple very nicely done ships. I would guess that this is somewhere on the west coast. There is also a very good model of a Great Lakes freighter and a Navy ship on the back wall.*

The Colorado Model Railroad Museum is located at [680 10th Street in Greeley, Colorado](https://www.cmrmm.org/) (1 hour north of Denver).

Days and hours of operation change seasonally; check their web site [cmrm.org](https://www.cmrmm.org/) for updated information and admission prices before heading out.

The museum has also published a [video tour on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...).



# Rail Dreams & Track Plans

by Cliff Scherer

**W**elcome to our new Marker Lamp series – topics of interest to those just getting started in the hobby and to those who may have been out of the hobby for a while. Over the next several Marker Lamp issues we'll explore the basics of model railroading with practical takeaways and plenty of references to get you going!

Track Planning is great fun to many model railroaders (MRR's) as it transforms our dreams to scale plans. But to others it can become a frustration as we face the realities of limited space for our layout. If you're like me, your mind's eye sees a much bigger layout than is possible in the space that you have available. Let's look at how to approach the dream-to-plan transition without the frustration, and then how to get to a scale plan that you can use to build your layout.

The five topics that will get us from dream to track plan:

1. Your dream – what you expect from your new layout.
2. Available space for the layout including any encroachments or obstructions.
3. Don't bite off more than you can chew!
4. Best practices.
5. Get it down on paper – or maybe on your computer screen!

### The Dream

Your dream for your layout will determine how you utilize the space available. For track planning we're talking about what you expect of the plan – we'll call these goals. Here are examples of possible goals:

- Long trains running continuously
- Ability to run realistic operations by yourself or with others
- Switching operations in an industrial setting
- Short line or branch line railroading
- Narrow gauge railroading

There are others, and your vision may combine some or all of these goals. You should formulate clearly in your

mind what you expect before you can move forward. That's because each of the goals dictates the need for different elements in your track plan and also defines how layout space is used.

For example, if you want to run long trains, you'll need to look at how a given length of train will fit in the space you have for the layout. Or, if you want switching operations in an industrial setting, you'll need to look at how much space is consumed by switches. Our mind's eye tends to "see" the ability to fit in broader curves, more turnouts and other track elements in our allotted space when there's not really that much room (see Figure 1).

### Available Space

The space for your layout is probably clearly defined and is one of the fixed specifications in your track planning. The primary corresponding variable is the scale you've chosen. At this point it's good to start visualizing how an actual scale train will fit in the space you have. For that, let's briefly look at an N scale and HO scale comparison.

Take a hypothetical train that has a 56' long Alco RS-1 Engine, five 40' boxcars, and a 30' caboose. That's 286' in full size. In N scale that train is 21.5" long. In HO scale it is 39.5" long (see figure 2). Now, let's say one of your goals is running longer trains. The same train with 10 boxcars is 36.5" in N scale and 67" in HO scale.

While we're on available space, don't forget to allow for obstructions like doors and closets if you're using a spare room, and allow for access from all sides if you're building an island layout like a 4'x8'. If space is at a premium, you should also consider layouts that can be stored away. A small N scale layout can be equipped with folding legs and slid under a bed. Countless 4'x8' layouts have been suspended from garage ceilings on a pulley system – raised and lowered as needed.

### Don't Bite Off More Than You Can Chew

The journey to building your model railroad layout should be fun. To make sure it stays that way, ease your dream into the space you have as discussed in this article, but also remember that there is no timeline to completing a layout and no level of completion that is required. There are plenty of MRR's who lay down track and start running trains



Figure 1: Track planning is quite different when the goal is long trains versus a more compact switching layout.

without ever worrying about scenery or even buildings – nothing wrong with that. Build what you want.

That said, most MRR's dream of a layout that looks like the slick color photos in magazines or online. Many of these layouts have been years in the making. And a great many of them have been built in phases over time. Phased layout construction serves two purposes. First it breaks the work into bite-size pieces and second it gives a way to get trains running early in the construction process. Getting the trains running is important to most of us because it helps to hold our interest and spur us on to the next phase.

Constructing in phases goes beyond the scope of this article, but one aspect of phased construction is important in track planning. That is providing for add-

ons to the layout over time. For example, you could build a 4'x8' layout today with provision to have tracks run in the future to a peninsula extending from one side of the 4x8. An excellent example of a layout built in phases is David Meek's Thunder Mesa Mining Company. This layout is in On30 scale and started life as a simple 3'x6' layout. Today it is 16'x13'. To see the progression over the years, go to <https://thundermesa.studio/artwork/track-plans/>.



Figure 2: Think about size of trains in relation to your space. This train is 21.5" in N scale and 39.5" in HO scale.

## Best Practices

Smooth running trains without problems of stalling, derauling or unexpected uncoupling will make your layout a joy to operate. To achieve this, there are some best practices to follow when creating your track plan:

- Minimum Radius – This depends on your scale and the type of engines and rolling stock (see figure 3). Check out these tips on curves: [https://www.ldsig.org/hints-and-tips/#Curve\\_radius\\_rule-of-thumb](https://www.ldsig.org/hints-and-tips/#Curve_radius_rule-of-thumb)
- Easements – An easement is an entry into a curve that is broader in radius than the rest of the curve. It is prototypical, looks good on the layout, and improves performance. This site has a discussion on easements: <https://www.nmra.org/sites/default/files/d3b1.pdf>
- Turnout Size – Turnouts are numbered according to size, such as #5, #6, or #8. A smaller number indicates shorter overall length, but a tighter radius as the diverging track splits away from the through

track. Turnout size has an impact on train performance as well as what will fit in your allotted space. Generally smaller number turnouts are used in yards and larger

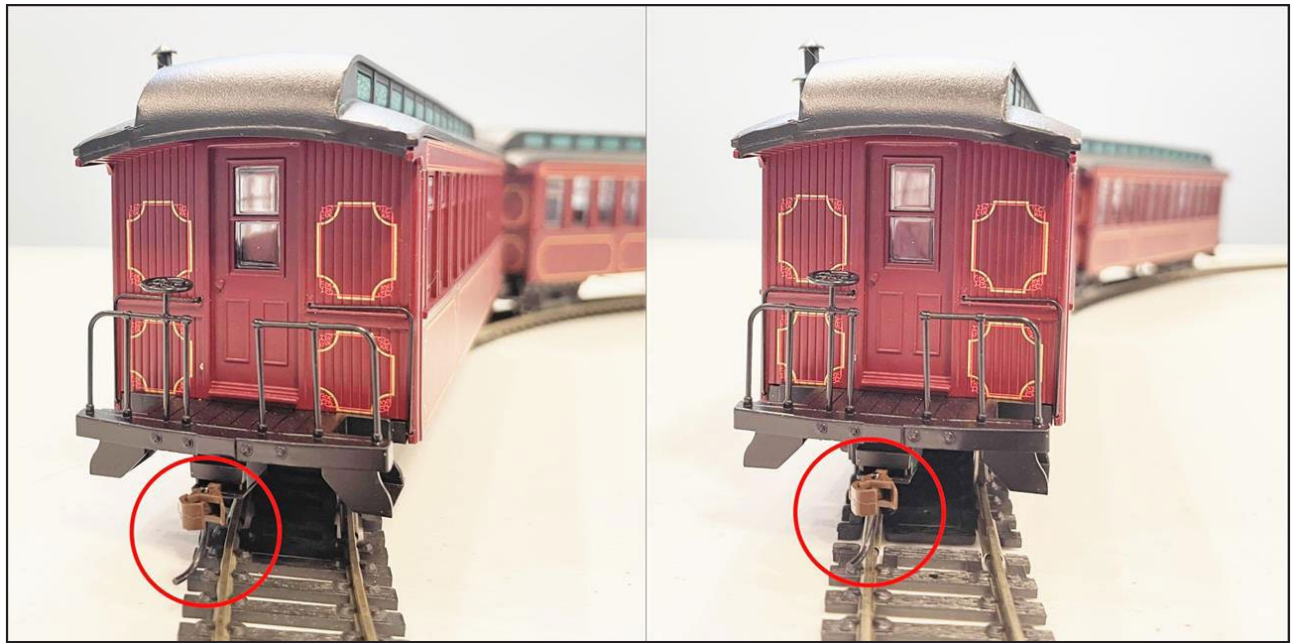


Figure 3: On the left is 15" radius and the right is 22" radius. Note the coupler overhang and odd angle of divergence for the background car on the 15" radius.

numbers on the mainline (see figure 4).

- Spacing for Parallel Tracks and Track Clearance – Whether in a yard or on the mainline, you'll need to consider distance between two tracks and distance between a track and a structure. Here is the NMRA reference: <https://www.nmra.org/index-nmra-standards-and-recommended-practices>. On the Standards page, scroll down to Recommended Practice RP-7 near the middle of the page.
- Grades - If your track will have elevation changes, you'll need to consider maximum grades. The maximum depends on you're the type of equipment you'll be

running and the length of trains. We often hear 2% as the maximum, but there are plenty of exceptions to that. There are many MRR's running 3 and 4% grades, but not much beyond that. Generally, you'll be better off if you can limit grades to 2% (see figure 5).

- Coupling Locations – It's difficult to couple and uncouple cars on a curve. Keep this in mind when you create your track plan. You may be tempted to fit a siding in as a curve, but it will be harder to pick up or drop a car in that location.
- Passing Sidings – If you expect to run more than a single train at one time, you'll need at least one passing siding

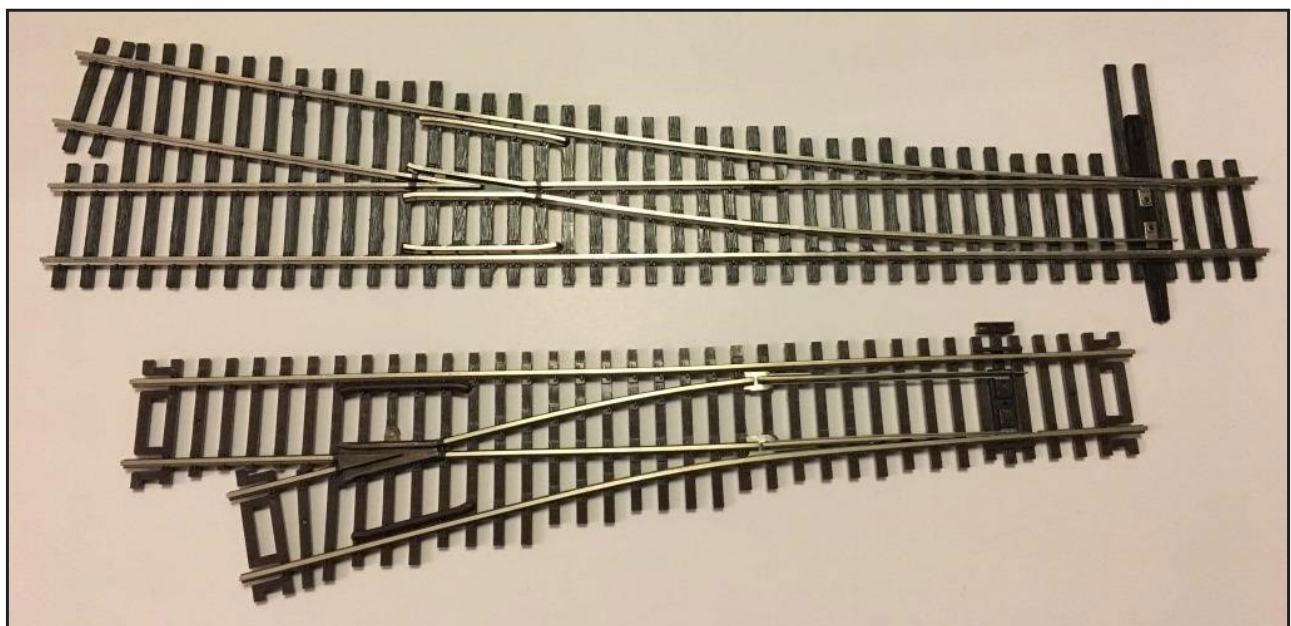


Figure 4: The top turnout is a #6 and the bottom is a #4. Note the #6 is much longer, but has a more gentle divergence.

that will handle the length of trains that you intend to run.

- Access to the Layout – As you develop your track plan remember that you need to have access to all areas – to clean track, fix derailments, keep things clean, repair scenery, etc. If your layout is an island such as a 4'x8', just make sure you can get to all sides. If the layout is around the room, you'll need to determine the maximum distance from the wall based on height of the layout and what you are comfortable with.

### Get it down on paper – or maybe on your computer screen!

Now for the fun part – laying out the actual plan. Most of us start by doodling our ideas on paper. Many MRR's have created numerous plans hand drawn on paper to visualize the mind's eye. If you have access to a whiteboard, that's another place to get the conceptual track plan started. Hand drawing your ideal plan is still the best way to get started. You can quickly try different ideas, but at some point, you'll need to get the plan drawn in scale to ensure that everything fits (see figure 6).

There are four ways to accomplish this:

1. Obtain an existing plan from a book, magazine, or the Internet.
2. Draw your plan on graph paper to scale using a compass for curves and scale templates for turnouts. You'll probably have to make the turnout templates from full size samples reduced to the scale of your drawing.
3. Create your track plan using one of the track planning computer programs such as:
  - SCARM <https://www.scarm.info/index.php>
  - Templot <http://templot.com/companion/installation.php>
  - Anyrail <https://www.anyrail.com/en>
  - Atlas <https://shop.atlasrr.com/t-software.aspx>
  - 3rdplanit <https://www.trackplanning.com/how-will-you-plan-your-layout.htm>
4. Draw your track plan in full size using builders' paper (available at Home Depot, Lowes, etc.) taped to the floor



Figure 5: Here Woodland Scenics foam risers are used to create a smooth grade. These are available in different grade % increments.

in the layout area. Use a beam compass or radius sticks, and full-size turnout templates. Draw the track plan using a Sharpie.

Each method has its pros and cons, so the best one is the one you're most comfortable with.

### Where To Go from Here

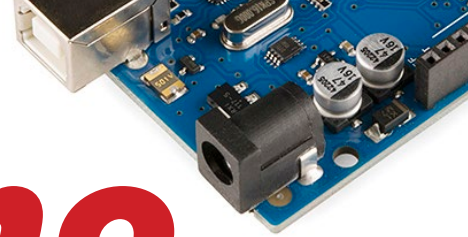
The National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) publishes an excellent Beginners Guide online. Here's the link to the section on track planning: <https://www.nmra.org/beginners-guide-part-2-layout-planning>

At the end of that online section you'll find a wealth of references on track planning from websites to videos to books.

So concludes our whirlwind tour of track planning. There's a lot to consider but have some fun with looking at the options and you'll have a satisfying layout in no time! **ML**



Figure 6: An 8'x2' switching plan drawn to scale in the Anyrail application. Note the interesting fiddle yard hidden in the warehouse.

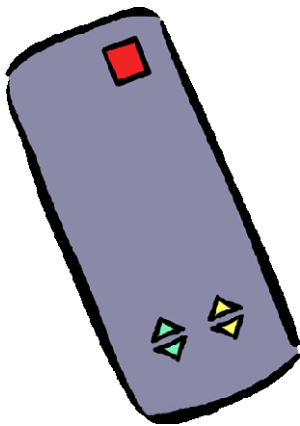


# ...RRRduino...

By Speed Muller

## A One Button Remote-Controlled Relay - With No Wires

**S**ometimes we bump into a problem that needs a real solution and then we put it off for another week, month or year. But sometimes we bump into that same problem twice in a week, so thank you Mike O'Dorney for asking again on Facebook for the same thing Randy Ellis wanted! A remote button to turn something on or off!



With the IOT (Internet Of Things) filtering into our lives (who has not heard: “Alexa, turn on the TV room light?”), we are now getting used to turning things on by voice or gesture, but unknowingly more important, we are turning them on and off **remotely**. Or better said, you are not yelling at the TV room light, you are talking to a device that is not necessarily wired directly into that bulb. So, if we remove the voice part for a future article, let’s see with how little cost and code we can toggle a relay on the other side of the train room without wires!

There are many ways to control things using wireless technologies and a few examples such include Infrared (optical, like most older TV remote controls), KeyFobs (RF unlocking your car), X10 (RF to AC wiring), Wi-Fi (Hz, multiples of it, over the air), Bluetooth (UHF radio waves as well in the ISM band) and a plethora of other standalone RF implementations using a single frequency to send a command to turn something on or off using lower frequencies like 433 MHz. Do a Google search for “Wireless Relay 12V Long Range Remote Control Switch, Universal 433MHz RF Transmitter Receiver” and you’ll recognize the kind of circuit mentioned here. And then there are gesture sensors and even some using sound where you can clap your hands to make something change!

So, with only cost (\$\$\$) and the ease of creating multiple sets to control more things, I am going to show you how to use a somewhat new technology called ESP-NOW, that uses Wi-Fi without using your Wi-Fi Access Point or Router, but only the MAC address of the receiving Wi-Fi device and of course the same frequency spectrum as Wi-Fi.

My favorite Espressif Systems device is the ESP-01(s) in the ESP8266 family (1), simply because [they are \\$0.77](#) and they have a fixed footprint with 8 pins in a 2x4 arrangement. They also need a 3.3V power supply, but you can provide that with the same device used to program it with, [including the ESP01 for \\$2.07](#) (2). If you don’t want to wait for international shipping, the Programmer Downloader Adapter is available at Amazon, [2 for \\$11](#) (December 2022).

And now you just need to use some “Arduino” wires to connect the button and relay to their respective boards. Powering things up now only requires a USB cable with 5 Vdc on the other side, either a cell phone charger or a computing device.

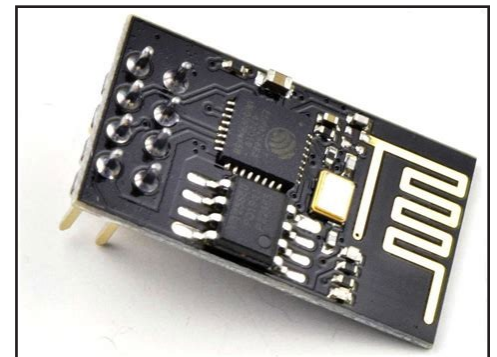


Figure 1: ESP8266 in the ESP-01(s) Configuration

That said, there are plenty of other ESP devices that will work just as well, including all the ESP8266 and ESP32 boards you can get your hands on. Just make sure you get your hands on enough documentation to show you which pin is labeled as what. Also available in the world are relay “shields” for various ESP products, so now you only need to connect power and the wires that are switched with the relay.

You might also want to get your hands on a [3.3 Vdc controlled relay](#) (make sure to pick the 3.3 Vdc version since the ESP devices are not 5 Vdc friendly). If all you have is a 5 Vdc or 12 Vdc operated relay, add a FET (field effect transistor) or an optocoupler to turn the relay on. But wait, look what we just found on the interweb: [an ESP01 on a board with a relay](#) (3)!

If getting your free Arduino IDE up and running with the ESP development kit (by adding a line in [Preferences](#) to add another Board Support Package and then adding the ESPxxx in the Boards Manager) sounds like to big a task, you can use a little [ESP Flasher](#) tool with the programming adapter instead. Just connect the ESP to the computer’s USB port and upload a file. Just ask for such a binary file and we will help.

Next is the Fritzing diagram for the Sender or controlling side (where you press the button), showing you the ESP-01 implementation without the power connections and the WeMos/NodeMCU version (4):

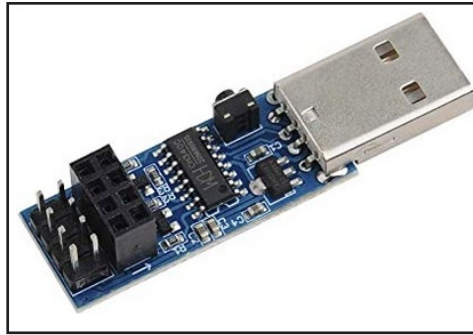


Figure 2: Programmer Downloader Adapter

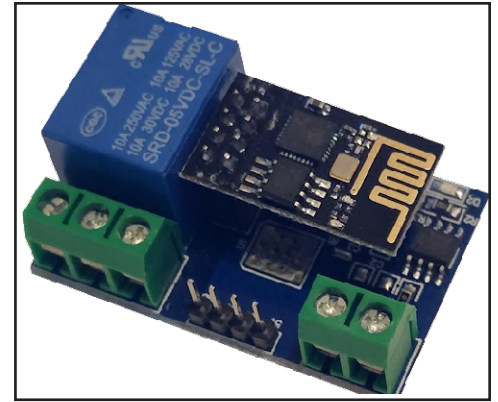
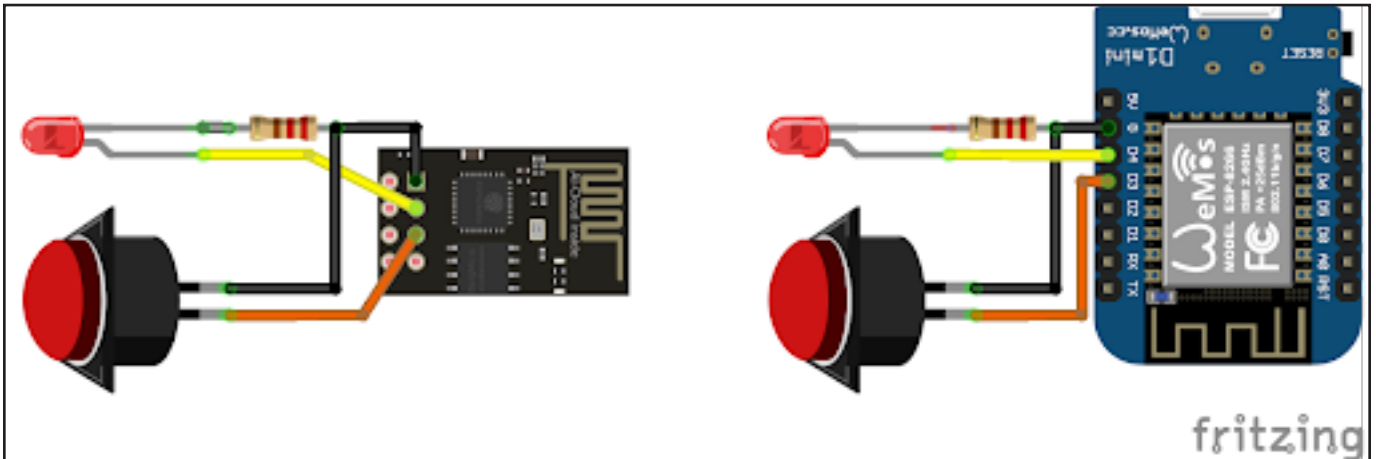
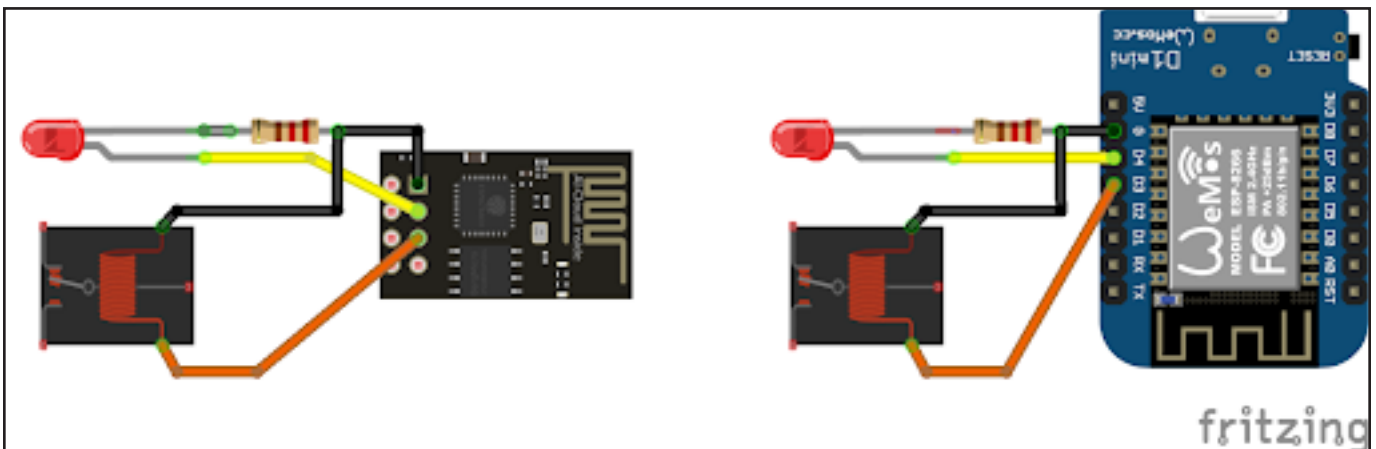


Figure 3: ESP01 Board with Relay



Alternatively, use this diagram for the Receiver (which is actually controlling the relay) if you do not have the modular version shown above (5):



Again, it is advised to use a 3.3 Vdc controlled relay, because these controllers are 3.3 Vdc devices.

We will show the Receiver code first, since it shows the crucially needed MAC address in the Serial Port Monitor, that you will need to put in the Sender's code to be able to send data across successfully. See the bold red comment in the code.

Any code that is not needed, but helpful to debug, is shown *in italics*, so if you need a smaller program, remove all that.

We actually only handle the toggling of the heartbeat LED in the *loop*( ) function. If the ESP-NOW code is initialized, we register a callback function that is called whenever a message is delivered. And only then do we decide what to do with it. In this case, turn the relay on or off. You can imagine that a servo could be moved to angle x or y, but adding your own commands and what to do with them.

```
/*
 * A relay to be controlled by a push button from the other side of an ESP-NOW connection.
 * For a 3.3 Vdc ESP system, use a 3.3 Vdc relay to control your up to a 110 Vac gadget.
 *
 * The MAC address of this system is needed by the controlling side, so it is printed on
 * startup.
 *
 * Author: Speed Muller
 *
 * reference: https://randomnerdtutorials.com/esp-now-esp32-arduino-ide/
 */

#ifdef ESP8266
#include <ESP8266WiFi.h>
#else
#include <WiFi.h>
#endif
#include <espnow.h>

#define VERSION_STR "RRRduino ESP Relay v0.01, 2022.09.10"
#define BAUDRATE 115200
#define HEARTBEAT 1000
#define RELAY_PIN 0

// D4 on Lolin NodeMCU:
#define LED_PIN 2
#define TOGGLECOMMAND 't'

// Structure to receive data
typedef struct struct_message {
    char cLetter[4];
    bool bState;
} struct_message;

struct_message stctMyData;
uint32_t u32Now, u32Before = 0;

// OnEspNowDataReceive( ): Called with message received
void OnEspNowDataReceive( uint8_t *u8MacAddr, uint8_t *u8IncomingData, uint8_t u8Len ) {
    memcpy( &stctMyData, u8IncomingData, sizeof( stctMyData ) );
    Serial.print( F( "Bytes received = " ) );
    Serial.print( u8Len );
    Serial.print( F( ": [ " ) );
    Serial.print( stctMyData.cLetter );
    Serial.print( F( ", " ) );
    Serial.print( stctMyData.bState ? "true" : "false" );
    Serial.println( F( " ]" ) );
}
```

```

    if( stctMyData.cLetter[0] == TOGGLECOMMAND ) {
        setRelay( stctMyData.bState ); // Update relay to new command
    } // if password good
} // void OnEspNowDataReceive( uint8_t *, uint8_t *, uint8_t )

// setRelay( bool ): Set the RELAY_PIN to the bool state
void setRelay( bool bRelayState ) {
    digitalWrite( RELAY_PIN, bRelayState );
} // void setRelay( bool )

// setup( ): Setup pins up, print version+mac, init ESP-NOW,
//           register receive callback, and capture time
void setup( ) {
    Serial.begin( BAUDRATE );

    pinMode( LED_PIN, OUTPUT );
    digitalWrite( LED_PIN, LOW ); // LED off

    pinMode( RELAY_PIN, OUTPUT );
    digitalWrite( RELAY_PIN, LOW ); // Relay off

    Serial.println( F( VERSION_STR ) ); // Print the version

    WiFi.mode( WIFI_STA );
    Serial.println( WiFi.macAddress( ) ); // Print the MAC address like "8C:CE:4E:E3:EB:39"
                                           // And this is needed by the Sender in the form of
                                           // { 0x8C, 0xCE, 0x4E, 0xE3, 0xEB, 0x39 };

    if( esp_now_init( ) == 0 ) { // Initialize ESP-NOW
        Serial.println( F( "ESP NOW initialized..." ) );
    } else {
        Serial.println( F( "ESP NOW initialize failed..." ) );
        ESP.restart( );
        delay( 10 ); // not a real delay, we are rebooting
    } // if esp_now init

    esp_now_register_recv_cb( OnEspNowDataReceive ); // Register callback for receiving
    u32Now = u32Before = millis( );
} // setup( )

// loop( ): Only control the heartbeat LED
void loop( ) {
    u32Now = millis( );

    if( u32Now - u32Before > HEARTBEAT ) {
        digitalWrite( LED_PIN, !digitalRead( LED_PIN ) ); // read and write the inverse
        u32Before = u32Now;
    } // if time for heartbeat
} // loop( )

```

And here is the code for the Sender that will toggle the state of the relay internally and send the command when you let go of the button. It will also send the command at a regular interval (10 seconds) just in case your receiver is powering up later and needs this information later. The code to look for a command from the Serial Port is at the end of this article in Appendix A, copy it into the space indicated by the comment in `loop( )`. The command needs to be `":t;"` where the code is waiting for a colon to start and a semicolon to know it is the end of the command.

The data or command sent across the air is defined to be 5 bytes long, the command sent can be 4 bytes long (we only use the first byte, 't' or 0x74) and the true or false for the relay state is the 5th byte. Why the 4 bytes? So that we can add plenty of other commands later!

So, after everything is initialized, we attempt to get the ESP-NOW running, and if it fails, we simply reboot the system. Once going, we make ourselves the commanding officer and then register a function to let us know if a sent message was delivered or not. And this will tell you if the Receiver got the message. Not what it did with it, but only how successful the delivery was. If you need feedback from the Receiver on what it did, you simply add code to send from the Receiver and register a receive function on this side to handle the messages traveling the other way.

If you use the Serial Port to toggle the relay with “:t;” or you release the button on pin 0, the local state of the relay will change and we send the message across. As long as the unit is powered, it will send the state of the relay across every 10 seconds even if you don’t touch the button or use the Serial Port. We do this, just in case the Receiver wakes up later or rebooted and doesn’t have the current state. Since it will power up with the relay off by default.

```
/*
 * A button to press to change the state of a relay on the other side
 * of the ESP-NOW connection. An LED could show the current commanded
 * state of the relay.
 *
 * The MAC address of the ESP with the relay is needed in the
 * broadcastAddress to send the data to.
 *
 * Author: Speed Muller
 *
 * reference: https://randomnerdtutorials.com/esp-now-esp32-arduino-ide/
 */

#ifdef ESP8266
#include <ESP8266WiFi.h>
#else
#include <WiFi.h>
#endif

#include <espnow.h>

#define VERSION_STR "RRRduino ESP Button v0.01, 2022.09.10"
#define BAUDRATE 115200
#define HEARTBEAT 1000
#define UPDATEATLEAST 10000

#define TOGGLECOMMAND 't'

#define BUTTON_PIN 0
#define LED_PIN 2

// Receiver address: "8C:CE:4E:E3:EB:39", this is needed from the Receiver device
uint8_t u8ArrBroadcastAddress[] = { 0x8C, 0xCE, 0x4E, 0xE3, 0xEB, 0x39 };

// Structure to send data
typedef struct struct_message {
    char cLetter[4];
    bool bState;
} struct_message;

struct_message stctMyData;
uint32_t u32Now, u32LastUpdate = 0;

bool bState = false;
bool bChanged = true;

// OnEspNowDataReceive( ): Called when message delivered
void OnEspNowDataSent( uint8_t *mac_addr, uint8_t u8Status ) {
```

```

    Serial.print( F( "Last packet send status: Delivery " ) );
    Serial.println( u8Status == 0 ? "Success" : "Failed" );
} // OnDataSent( const uint8_t *, esp_now_send_status_t )


// setup( ): Print version+mac, init ESP-NOW, register send callback,
// setup pins up and capture time
void setup( ) {
    Serial.begin( BAUDRATE );

    pinMode( BUTTON_PIN, INPUT_PULLUP );

    pinMode( LED_PIN, OUTPUT );
    digitalWrite( LED_PIN, LOW );
    delay( 100 );

    Serial.println( );
    Serial.println( F( VERSION_STR ) );

    WiFi.mode( WIFI_STA );
    Serial.println( WiFi.macAddress( ) );

    if( esp_now_init( ) == 0 ) { // Initialize ESP-NOW
        Serial.println( F( "ESP NOW initialized..." ) );
    } else {
        Serial.println( F( "ESP NOW initialize failed..." ) );
        ESP.restart( );
        delay( 10 );
    } // if esp_now initialized

    esp_now_set_self_role( ESP_NOW_ROLE_CONTROLLER );
    esp_now_register_send_cb( OnEspNowDataSent ); // Register callback for sending

    // Add the peer (receiver)
    esp_now_add_peer( u8ArrBroadcastAddress, ESP_NOW_ROLE_SLAVE, 1, NULL, 0 );

    bState = false; // Default state
    bChanged = true; // Force update at power up
    u32Now = u32LastUpdate = millis( );
} // setup( )


// loop( ): Check for a Serial port command, check if the button is pressed,
// Keep track of the relay state and send the command when state changed
// and also at a regular interval (UPDATEATLEAST)
void loop( ) {
    u32Now = millis( ); // Get the time

    // insert Serial Port code here, if needed. See Appendix A

    if( digitalRead( BUTTON_PIN ) == LOW ) {
        delay( 100 ); // Allow debounce to happen
        Serial.println( "." );

        while( digitalRead( BUTTON_PIN ) == LOW ) {
            delay( 10 ); // Wait for it to go HIGH
        } // while LOW
        bState = !bState;
        bChanged = true;
    }
}

```

```

} // if button pressed

if( bChanged || ( u32Now - u32LastUpdate > UPDATEATLEAST ) ) {
  u32LastUpdate = u32Now;
  bChanged = false;
  stctMyData.cLetter[0] = TOGGLECOMMAND;
  stctMyData.cLetter[1] = 0x00; // terminate string
  //strcpy( myData.a, "t" ); // 't'oggle command, use for strings
  stctMyData.bState = bState;

  esp_now_send( u8ArrBroadcastAddress, (uint8_t *)&stctMyData, sizeof( stctMyData ) );
  Serial.print( F( "Sent: [ " ) );
  Serial.print( stctMyData.cLetter );
  Serial.print( F( ", " ) );
  Serial.print( stctMyData.bState ? "true" : "false" );
  Serial.println( F( "]" ) );
} // if a change, then send
} // loop( )

// Sketch uses 270136 bytes (35%) of program storage space. Maximum is 761840 bytes.
// Global variables use 27324 bytes (33%) of dynamic memory,
// leaving 54576 bytes for local variables. Maximum is 81920 bytes.

```

When the Sender powers up, you will see the following sequence, the red part when the Receiver is not in range or powered up, the green part when the relay state is off (you did not touch anything), then blue to send that you pushed the button, and then green again when you pushed the button a second time to turn the relay off:

```

RRRduino ESP Button v0.01, 2022.09.10
2C:3A:E8:3E:7D:28
ESP NOW initialized...
Sent: [t, false]
Last packet send status: Delivery Failed
Sent: [t, false]
Last packet send status: Delivery Success
Sent: [t, false]
Last packet send status: Delivery Success
Sent: [t, true]
Last packet send status: Delivery Success
Sent: [t, false]
Last packet send status: Delivery Success

```

You might want to add more debugging or information, like displaying which MAC address the Sender is going to send the data to. And since we show how to use the Serial Port and EEPROM in a prior article, you can also allow the user to provide the MAC address over the Serial Port and then store it in the EEPROM or in a LittleFS file for surviving a power cycle. And then you don't need to recompile and upload code for every Sender/Receiver pair you create.

The heartbeat LED on the Sender is not shown in the code, you can add that for homework, or maybe indicate the expected state of the relay, or even better, have the Receiver reply back to the Sender the state of the relay and indicate THAT instead on the Sender's LED?

Once you master all of this, you are ready to upgrade all of this to go with real Wi-Fi and use something like [a web page](#) on the ESP to control the relay, or use [MQTT](#) to interact with Alexa, "Hey Goo-Goo" or even just JMRI with something like [mqTrains](#) to control your layout!

**All the code above is shared in github;** Receiver as [ESP8266\\_wRelay.ino](#) and the Sender as [ESP8266\\_wButton.ino](#) You might also find a link to it at [blog.RRRduino.com](#).

Your turn, we would also like to hear from you. What do we show next and/or where do we go from here?

– Speed

## Abbreviations:

ISM - radio bands that are portions of the radio spectrum reserved internationally for industrial, scientific and medical purposes

JMRI - **J**ava **M**odel **R**ailroad **I**nterface (jmri.org)

MAC - A media access control address is a unique identifier assigned to a network interface controller

## Appendix A:

And here is the Serial Port code, if you would like to send a ":" command from the Serial Port Monitor to control the relay:

```
String strIncoming;  
String strBefore;  
  
if( Serial.available( ) > 0 ) {  
    strBefore = Serial.readStringUntil( ':' );  
    Serial.print( strBefore );  
    Serial.print( ":" );  
    strIncoming = Serial.readStringUntil( ';' );  
    Serial.print( strIncoming );  
    Serial.println( ";" );  
    if( strIncoming.length( ) > 0 ) {  
        if( strIncoming.charAt( 0 ) == TOGGLECOMMAND ) {  
            bState = !bState;  
            bChanged = true;  
        } // if "press" command :p;  
    } // if something  
} // if data available
```





# A Visit to the Hobby Shop

by Bob Barnett, MMR

*All photos courtesy of G&G Model Shop*

**V**ery few things linger in our memories like our first visit to the local hobby shop. To a newcomer in the hobby, it opens the door to a magical world that remains in our minds as special.

I have previously made an appeal to LSR Members to consider doing a short write up or article on their favorite local hobby shops. We have lost several iconic hobby shops around the LSR in the past few years. So having no takers I am submitting an article previously published in the Derail, the San Jacinto Model Railroad club's monthly newsletter. It was published in 2019 upon the death of Gus Freitag, the longtime owner of G&G Model Shop in Houston. At the time G&G was the oldest surviving model shop in Texas. But some other iconic shops that come to mind are:

- Hall's Hobby Shop in Dallas
- Tolson's in Fort Worth
- A.D. Welborn's in Fort Worth
- Pecos River Brass in Lewisville
- Two States' Hobbies in Texarkana
- Bellaire Roundhouse in Houston (actually Bellaire)
- The long-time shop in Arlington whose name escapes me (was it Hobby Hub?)
- Dick's Hobby Shop in San Antonio
- King's Hobby Shop in Austin
- Village Hobby Shop in Austin
- Cook's Collector's Corner in Shreveport
- And in more recent times,
- Papa Ben's in Houston
- Discount Hobbies in Addison (Dallas)

And undoubtedly, I have omitted some other very fine shops, perhaps your favorite.

So, **this is your chance**. Write a short article or send me some descriptive facts and I will prepare something. Hope to hear from you.

*Robert W. Barnett, MMR*

LSR Historian

---

I can't think of a better tribute to Gus Freitag and his legacy to the model railroad community than to describe his life's work ...The G&G Model Shop.

The history of the G&G Model Shop is very well documented on their website and if you have not visited the site, I highly recommend it. G&G claims to be the "oldest hobby shop in Texas" and I can't see how that could be wrong. The only two real contenders in recent years would have been G&G and Hall's Hobby Shop in Dallas. Both opened for business shortly after World War II. Since the founders of both shops are no longer with us one would have to go into some ancient business or tax records to see who actually opened their doors first. But the point is moot as Hall's Hobby Shop closed several years ago leaving G&G in sole possession of the claim of being the oldest hobby shop in the state.

Gus has been associated with G&G Model Shop since 1946. According to the eulogy delivered by his son, Derwood, Gus began working part time as the "Repair guy" at G&G shortly after returning from the US Navy at the end of the War, while keeping his day job at a Houston bank. A short time later Gus transitioned to a full-time employee at G&G and remained so until he and wife Rhoda purchased the shop in the 1960's.

Besides being a well-run and well-stocked hobby supply store G&G has always had another key ingredient missing from the modern discount or "big box" stores ---- *ambiance*. If you visit the web site and click on the customer's stories link, you will find testimonial after testimonial that refer to the friendly service and relaxed atmosphere of an "Old Fashioned Hobby Shop". Gus and all the folks at G&G made sure the new-comer as well as the old timers in the hobby felt welcome and were well served. The friendly service that many business establishments claim, and few really deliver, accounts for the Shop's loyal customer base over 70 years.

I first visited G&G Model Shop in 1978 shortly after moving to Houston. It's hard to imagine now but 40 years ago there were no Google Maps or search engines to find a business or address. Even the Key Map was new then, so the \$1.00 City maps sold at the gas station or Walgreens was it. Finding Bellaire Roundhouse was relatively easy, (Bellaire Blvd. was a long and well-known street). The same goes for John's Hobby Shop at the corner of Westheimer and Drexel. But G&G was located on Times Boulevard, a very short street not easily found on those folded dollar maps. Besides, Times

Boulevard must be “downtown” with a name like that. So, imagine my surprise that when I finally found the hobby shop on Times, it was within walking distance of my house!!!

Over the next 40 years I would visit G&G Model shop hundreds of times, my favorites being on Thursday evenings when the shop stayed open late. The atmosphere was always relaxed and friendly and the conversations excellent. I have included several photos borrowed from the G&G site with the Freitags’ permission. (There are many more on the website). Most of these are exterior shots of the shop over the years. But my favorite is the interior shot taken from the front door of the Time Blvd. location. The full row of Athearn “Blue Box” kits and the row of hanging Design Preservation and Woodland Scenics kits date the photo from the late 1970’s or 1980’s. If I had a dollar for every time I walked through that door and was greeted by Gus behind the counter I could have retired early, or at least bought a few more brass engines. Thank you to Gus, Rhoda and the Freitag family for providing the hobby community in Houston with a home base for over 70 years. **ML**



*George Morrison, the founder of G&G Model Shop, moved it to this location in 1948, on Isabella Street just off Alemda Road (at that time, SH 288)*



*This classic image of the front facade of G&G dates from the early 1950's. It is in the Rice Village on Times Boulevard*



*Perhaps the images that most current readers will recognize:  
The facade of the shop in later years with the iconic G&G Model Shop Sign and Gus*



*The view from the front door at the Times Boulevard store*



# Chair and Director Reports

## Membership



by Ken Kaiser  
LSR Membership Chair  
[kd1@flash.net](mailto:kd1@flash.net)

### Quarterly Membership Report

During the first six months of 2022 the number of LSR members decreased from 899 to 897. We had 76 new members and re-rails but lost 78 members (or 13 members a month).

We are doing an excellent job of recruiting new members, but if we are going to survive as a Region we need to plug the leak of members not renewing their memberships. The first step is to make sure we contact every member who is on the monthly 30 day list and determine why they chose not to renew their membership. This may be a difficult job for many since you may hear things you would rather not hear, but you cannot fix a problem unless you know why members chose not to renew. I previously suggested that each Division have a Membership Chairperson to perform that function. If you have not

## Youth



by Chuck Lind, MMR  
LSR Youth Chair  
[chucklind46@gmail.com](mailto:chucklind46@gmail.com)  
979-219-3305

### Youth Award Nominations Needed

If you are reading the Marker Lamp, you love model trains. Most of us got into this wonderful hobby as a youth. I am sure like me, someone mentored you and helped get you started and answered those many questions you had. Now its time to for you to pay back this great hobby and nominate a youth for the Lone Star Region Youth Award.

I go to train shows and as I walk around, I notice youth. So, the interest is there. Each year the Lone Star Region gives out 1 youth award in each of our 8 Divisions plus 1 additional award for the Board if needed. I hear folks complaining that there are no young people joining the model railroad hobby, not true they are out there you just need to look around. As you participate in local meets in your Division and in some of the local clubs look for that youth that has that same spark that you had many years ago. We need to encourage our youth and this award is a great way to recognize and help them follow a life long learning in our model train hobby.

Everything you need to nominate a youth can be found on the LSR web site. If you have questions, please check with your Division Director or myself. Nominations need to be turned into me by December 31. The nominations will be presented to the Board at the January mid-year Board meeting.

## Treasurer



by Speed Muller  
LSR Treasurer  
[lstrtreasurer@huntatrophycorp.com](mailto:lstrtreasurer@huntatrophycorp.com)

The 2022 LSR Convention hosted by the Cen-Tex Division in May in Temple, Texas was another successful convention, so much so that the LSR received \$896.18! We still have Delattre Fund money, so convince those people who served in the armed forces to model with us as NMRA members.

There are more and more attempts by scammers and swindlers to convince all of us to give them some free money. Just know that we do not handle ANY kind of gift cards or money from a foreign prince in any shape or form. So please do NOT even reply to those emails, just delete them.

### First Quarter, 2022/2023:

|                                        |                    |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Beginning Balances (2022/05/01)</b> |                    |
| LSR Unrestricted Accounts              | \$43,265.34        |
| <b>Beginning Total LSR Net Worth</b>   | <b>\$43,265.34</b> |
| Bob Clarke Award Fund                  | \$ 528.86          |
| Division 7 Rebate in Escrow            | \$ 150.50          |
| Delattre Fund                          | \$ 578.00          |
| Outstanding checks                     | \$ 58.00           |
| <b>Bank Saldo at bank</b>              | <b>\$44,580.70</b> |
| <b>Proceeds</b>                        |                    |
| Pike Ads                               | \$ 24.00           |
| Temple Convention Proceeds             | \$ 896.18          |
| <b>Total Proceeds</b>                  | <b>\$ 920.18</b>   |
| <b>Disbursements</b>                   |                    |
| Youth Chair Expenses                   | \$ 153.44          |
| Marketing                              | \$ 575.00          |
| President Awards                       | \$ 150.00          |
| Convention Contest Award Expenses      | \$ 406.00          |
| <b>Total Disbursements</b>             | <b>\$ 1284.44</b>  |
| <b>Net Proceeds-Disbursements</b>      | <b>\$ -364.26</b>  |
| <b>Updates to Restricted Funds:</b>    |                    |
| Delattre Fund                          | \$ 0.00            |
| Division 7 Rebate into Escrow          | \$ 0.00            |
| <b>Change in Liabilities</b>           | <b>\$ 0.00</b>     |
| <b>Ending Balances (2022/07/31)</b>    |                    |
| LSR Unrestricted Accounts Total        | \$42,901.08        |
| <b>Total LSR Net Worth</b>             | <b>\$42,901.08</b> |
| Bob Clarke Award                       | \$ 528.86          |
| Division 7 Rebate in Escrow            | \$ 150.50          |
| Delattre Fund                          | \$ 578.00          |
| Outstanding checks                     | \$ 58.00           |
| <b>Bank Saldo at bank</b>              | <b>\$44,216.44</b> |

## Achievement Program



by Duane Richardson, MMR  
LSR Achievement Chair  
[pinecreekstation@verizon.net](mailto:pinecreekstation@verizon.net)

It has been a slow few months since the convention in May. Since that time we have only had four certificates awarded in the LSR:

- **David Crumpton** – Structures (his 4th certificate)
- **Marc LaChey** – Cars (his 5th certificate)
- **Melvin Richards** – Civil and Electrical (his first 2 certificates)

Congratulations to each of you. I look forward to seeing more from each of you.

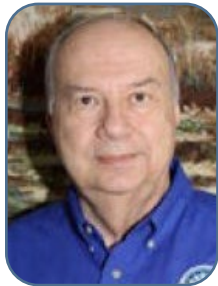
Per the latest report from National we just awarded the 717th Master Model Railroader. It took from 1961 to March of 2007 to reach the 391st MMR. In the 15 years since we have added 326. This speaks to the dedication of modelers across the organization who have gotten involved with the Achievement Program. You have all heard me say that it will make you a better modeler. It's true. Ask any MMR and they will tell you that they are a much better modeler having gone through the program and made the effort. You will learn new techniques and learn to work with materials that you likely never thought you would. I encourage each of you to get involved. It's not as hard as you think it is and you may be part of the way there already and not even know it.

If you have any questions please feel free to get in touch with me. My contact info is in the front of the Marker Lamp and on the regional website on the officers page.

## Contests



by Ray Byer  
LSR Contest Co-Chair  
[raybyer@yahoo.com](mailto:raybyer@yahoo.com)



and Jeff Palmer, MMR  
LSR Contest Co-Chair  
[res06wqv@gte.net](mailto:res06wqv@gte.net)

Here is the final report from the 2022 LSR Convention Contest:

- Total Entries in Model Contest: 65
- Total Entries in Arts & Crafts: 4
- Total Entries in Photography: 17
- Grand Total of All Entries: 86
- Number of Models that Merited: 14

Congratulations to all of the winners, including those who won special awards (most of which are voted upon by all convention attendees):

- Helen Beggane, Most Popular Arts & Crafts Entry and Arts & Crafts Best in Show
- Lourdes McCleary, Participation Award and Best in Show
- Russell Gifford, Best Tree and Most Popular Model
- Mike Mackey, Most Popular Complete Train
- Duane Richardson, Bob Clarke Logging Award
- Cole Rash, Novice Best in Show

All of the winners can be found earlier in this issue of the Marker Lamp.

## Conventions



by Joe Leising  
LSR Conventions Chair  
[joe@leising.com](mailto:joe@leising.com)

I was able to attend the 2022 NMRA Convention in St. Louis, primarily to get a hands-on experience on the inner workings of a national convention. Fortunately, I was befriended by the key individuals that coordinated the convention activities, Brad Joseph, David Lowell, Jim Ables, John Schindler, and Walter Beckman. They invited me into their inner circle and I was able to obtain valuable information that they shared with me and can be utilized in preparing for the 2023 NMRA Convention, being co-hosted by Cowcatcher Division 1 and Trinity River Division 3. The information will also be helpful as we prepare for future Lone Star Regional Conventions.

During the 2022 convention, several people volunteered their time to staff our registration table for the 2023 NMRA Convention. A special thank you for their time and efforts. People working the registration desk were:

|                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Chris Atkins        | Kevin Buchanan   |
| Ken Kaiser          | Michelle Kempema |
| Tim Kerfoot         | Joe Leising      |
| Brenda Mahan        | Chris Mahan      |
| Gert "Speed" Muller | Tom Pearson      |
| Riley Triggs        | Jay Waters       |
| Brooks Willig       |                  |

Special recognition to Chris Mahan and Brooks Willig. Chris not only worked multiple shifts, but he also made himself available at every opportunity when additional staffing was needed. Brooks was at the top of his game as he had his computer ready with a Google Earth view of the Gaylord Hotel and surrounding area, as well as all the 2023 Texas Express website tabs open to display convention information. When there was a question, Brooks was ready to both show and tell answers to all of the questions about the 2023 NMRA Convention.

Due to the efforts of the afore mentioned individuals, 2023 convention registrations nearly doubled during the 2022 convention, and an additional 200 manual entry forms were distributed to those that were not ready to immediately register. With the entry forms in hand, we can expect to see even more registrations in the near future. If you have not already registered for the 2023 NMRA Convention, go to [www.2023TexasExpress.com](http://www.2023TexasExpress.com) and register today.

## Education



by John Lorange, MMR  
LSR Education Chair  
[new-london@sbcglobal.net](mailto:new-london@sbcglobal.net)

(No report received)

If you would like to help with the 2023 NMRA Convention, contact **David Crumpton** at [David.Crumpton@sbcglobal.net](mailto:David.Crumpton@sbcglobal.net) to volunteer or **Cole Rash** at [Clinics@2023TexasExpress.com](mailto:Clinics@2023TexasExpress.com) to present a clinic. Use this opportunity to earn credits towards your next Achievement Program Certificate. Credits are generated at a higher point level for a national event as compared to a regional or division event.

Division Director **Rod Fredericks** and the members of the **Bayou Division 2** have stepped up to host the Lone Star Regional Convention in **2025**, to take place in **Baton Rouge, Louisiana**. This means that there will be six of eight LSR divisions that either have recently, or will be, participating in the annual LSR convention rotation, enabling even more people easy access to partake in this fun and educational annual regional event.

## Nominations



by Pete Leach, MMR  
LSR Nominations Chair  
[pleachtx55@gmail.com](mailto:pleachtx55@gmail.com)

The positions up for election to the Board of Directors and the candidates are listed below:

- President: Donna Orr
- Treasurer: Gert (Speed) Muller and Steve Sandifer
- Division 1 Director: Dick Brannan
- Division 3 Director: Charles Goodrich
- Division 5 Director: Brooks Willig
- Division 7 Director: Don Kimmell

I would like to thank Donna, Jeff Palmer, and the candidates for their support.

Please look for the Election notifications and on-line ballots later.

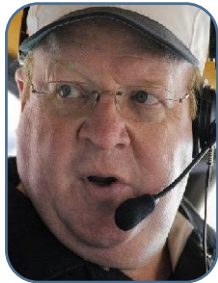
## Non-Rail



by Divina Gato-Hogno  
LSR Non-Rail Chair  
[d.gatohogno@gmail.com](mailto:d.gatohogno@gmail.com)

(No report received)

## Cowcatcher Division 1



by Mike Mackey, MMR  
[director@cowcatcherdivision.org](mailto:director@cowcatcherdivision.org)



[cowcatcherdivision.com](http://cowcatcherdivision.com)

*[Editor's Note: Since this report was received, Dick Brannan became the new Division 1 Director. He will be listed in future issues.]*

Division 1 is proud to report that momentum continues to build as we've seen over the past few year, even throughout the pandemic. Attendance at our monthly meetings is steady at around 50. We always offer our meetings to anyone via Zoom, so if you'd like to join us, just drop me an email at [director@cowcatcherdivision.org](mailto:director@cowcatcherdivision.org) and we'll add you to our growing list of remote attendees. We always have great presentations each month from people across the country. If you ever miss one of our meetings, feel free to catch up by using the D1 YouTube channel. You can find it, along with other useful information on our website which is [www.cowcatcherdivision.org](http://www.cowcatcherdivision.org).

Planning and preparation continues on next year's 2023 Texas Express NMRA International Convention and National Train Show. In case you weren't aware, the convention will be next August in Grapevine, Texas at the Gaylord Texan Hotel. Preparation on this event began back in 2018 and the August date was the only week available even 5 years out. We are still accepting volunteers for tasks associated with the convention. If you are interested in helping, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator David Crumpton via the convention website's Convention Committee link. That website address is [www.2023texasexpress.com](http://www.2023texasexpress.com). Registration is now open for both the convention and the hotel. Sign up early as there are benefits to having a lower registration number (i.e., preferences on tours, etc.) This convention promises to be one of the best in years. Don't miss the fun!

If you have questions about anything related to D1, don't hesitate to ask. Just send me an email at the email address above and I'll get back to you promptly.

Keep training!

## Bayou Division 2



by Rod Fredericks  
[fredericks.rod@gmail.com](mailto:fredericks.rod@gmail.com)



Before I get into this report, I would like to thank my friend Ken Mason for his four years of service as Division 2 Director. He took over the directorship from me, so this is my second time around.

For those that don't know me, my professional career was spent in oceanography with the Coastal Studies Institute at Louisiana State University. This work brought me around the world, allowing me visits railroads in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Australia, and South America, as well as many in North America. So needless to say, I have a keen interest in trains and model railroading.

My main interest is narrow gauge centered on mining in the San Juan area of Colorado. I model in HO<sub>N3</sub>. I have been working on my layout for ten years now and progress is slow, but steady.

As far as Division 2 is concerned, we have experienced a few setbacks recently. We have lost two active model railroaders, Dick Scheider and Jim Loftland. The Midsouth Model Railroad Club was forced to cease activity due to climbing rent and move the layout to storage with hope to rebuild as soon as a new site can be found. And the Crescent City Model Railroad Club in Kenner (New Orleans area) had suffered critical hurricane damage to their building's roof and some water damage to the layout. They are working now to repair both. More on that in the next report. On a more positive note, The Greater Baton Rouge Model Railroad Club is alive in Jackson, Louisiana.

My goal for my tenure as Division 2 Director is to be proactive in the division. This could involve division meets, clinics, visit to club and members layouts, perhaps operation sessions, etc. Communication is the key to a successful division. I would be happy to hear any ideas you may have. Contact me at [fredericks.rod@gmail.com](mailto:fredericks.rod@gmail.com).

And finally, I have been asked by the LSR to explore the possibility of hosting the 2025 LSR Convention in the Baton Rouge/New Orleans area. Sounds like a good idea to me.

So that's all for now. Happy model railroading.

## Trinity River Division



by Charles Goodrich, MMR  
[director@cowcatcherdivision.org](mailto:director@cowcatcherdivision.org)



[trinityriverdivision.org](http://trinityriverdivision.org)

As I prepare this report [*in late September -Ed*], we are fast approaching the Plano Train Show which was held on October 1 and 2nd at the Plano Events Center. It is sponsored by the North Texas Council of Railroad Clubs. Division 1 and 3 are members of this organization and contribute volunteers for clinics, ticket collection and manning the NMRA booth. The train show produces a good income for the divisions and is a prime source for new members. It exposes the North Texas area to the best hobby in the world, model railroading.

Trinity River division continues to recover in meeting attendance from covid. Membership is averaging between thirty and forty members. Clinics have been good and educational. We continue to have show and tell, tips and tricks and awards as part of the agenda.

Marc Lachey received his Master Builder Cars certificate (right). Marc had brought several Sn3 cars for Show and Tell and had the judged at the meeting. All of them were very well done. Congratulations Marc on a job well done.

The clinics presented during this period included the following:

- Jeff Rykiel presented "Module 101" where he showed how to build a light and indestructible module. Jeff is a master woodworker that is currently completing a large custom modular layout for a member of Division 3. Jeff described the selection and use of lumber and methods for constructing modules.
- Larry Pollis presented "DCC; From A to Nuts! Or is it From Soup to Z!?". This was subject that all of us need and was very informative
- Craig Tribuzi gave a clinic on the Westside Lumber Company. He concentrated his clinic on the sawmill which is the heart of the operation.



## Cen-Tex Division 4



by Bob Thiele  
[director@centexnmra.org](mailto:director@centexnmra.org)

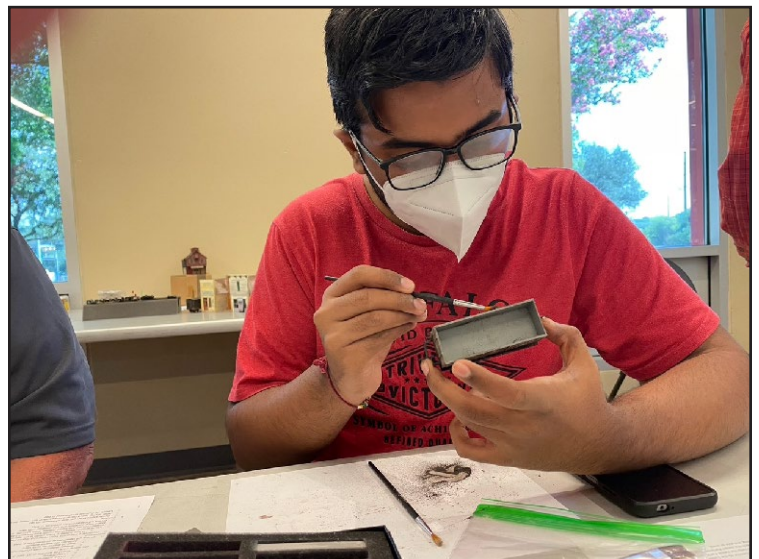


[centexnmra.org](http://centexnmra.org)

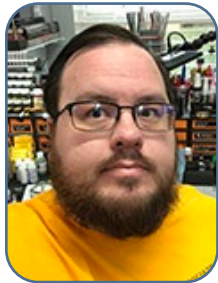
The Division has had a couple of interesting and informative Division meetings. We have been trying to refine the Zoom part of the meeting while conducting in persons gathers. We have installed to cameras and a room speaker which will enable attendees and Zoom viewers to converse easily. With a 50-inch LED screen to display Zoom members, we just need to fine tune the speaker to ensure the online members can enjoy the experience.

The first clinic was a hands-on making of foreground trees. This clinic was developed from an article by Pierre Oliver found in RMC January 2020. We circled the tables and passed out the tree making material and went to work. The special techniques enable the modeler to make a tree that looks real, right down to the leaves. The after-clinic comments were very positive from both those in attendance and online. At our September meeting we conducted another hands-on clinic where we developed some weather techniques. This clinic was conducted by David Nicastro in which he demonstrated his techniques for quickly turning shiny new cars in well worn equipment. This was a enjoyable clinic as members brought their own equipment and tried what they have just learned. I have included some pictures of members in action (right).

The Austin Modeler Railway Society (a 100% NMRA Club) held their annual train show in Austin and it was a great success. Attendance was up over last year and by the look on peoples faces they were having a good time. What stood out in my mind about the show was all the young families and kids that attended the show. This was a great place to expose kids and young adults to the wonders of model railroading. Division 4 set up a test table so that attendees could try out their new purchases. N, HO, S and O27 test tracks were available to test both DCC and DC engines.



## West Texas Division 5



by Brooks Willig  
[Headroadie2004@gmail.com](mailto:Headroadie2004@gmail.com)

[Newsletter](#)

(No report received)

## South Texas Division 6



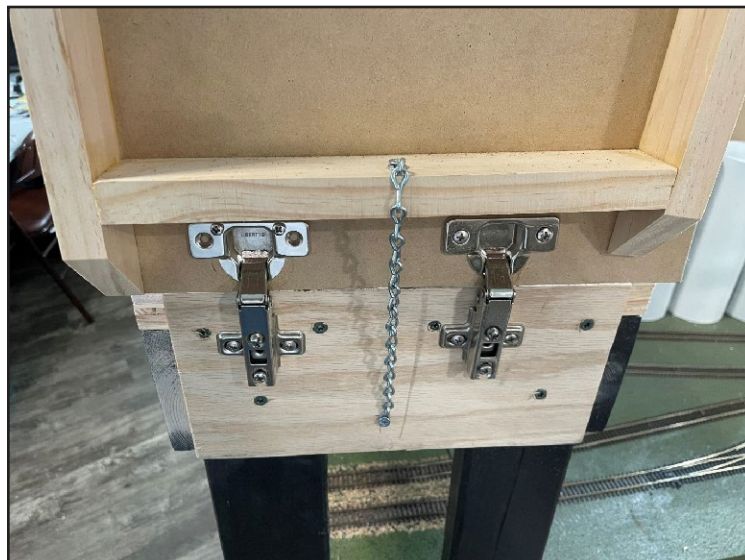
by Don Winn  
[donnswinn@gmail.com](mailto:donnswinn@gmail.com)

Howdy South Texans,

By the time you read this, we will have held our first official Division 6 meeting in quite a while. The South Texas Railroad Socials ended with their June meeting, and we'll be picking up with our division meetings from here on out. Our first meeting is planned for September 24th. We'll be following the same format as seen at many other divisions' meetings, which is what the Socials were based on. I'll have a full report in the next Marker Lamp.

Reminder that we're still taking nominations for our annual Youth Award. Please send in your suggestions on a deserving youth that you know (maybe even your own grandchild – that's fine) to be our 2023 award winner.

Work on my home layout progresses, and I have finally laid the track to connect the mainlines. I still have some wiring to do before we have an official golden spike ceremony and get trains running. One of the sections I completed recently was the hinged liftout to carry the mainlines across an aisle that serves the branchlines. To keep the hinges hidden, I used a set of cabinet hinges that allow the liftout to pull away so the rails don't bind together.





As always, if there is anything I can do to help you in your modeling, please don't hesitate to contact me.  
SAFETY FIRST - Stay safe out there.

## North Louisiana Division 7



by Don Kimmell  
[elf4kcs@me.com](mailto:elf4kcs@me.com)

As I am sure everyone knows it has been a brutally hot summer here in North Louisiana; I think the weather person said we have had over 33+ days of 100 degrees. I think that has contributed to the "slow" model railroading around here. A very good friend, Jim McC, who has his railroad (KCS) in a separate building has had some A/C issues that have shut down the weekly operating secessions, at least till the repairs are done.

That being said there is still some "railroading" going on. I am sure by now everyone knows the Kansas City Southern is attempting to merge with the Canadian Pacific. They are forecasting a large uptick in train frequency. We have noticed that we are seeing more and more CP units mixed with the KCS. There has been a number of "Business Train" trips since last May. We saw a "mixed" train back in May.



There were 4 CP cars tacked on the "Belle" as she ran down to Shreveport and south for a series of "Town Hall" meeting with all employees.

During May, we had a re-opening/re-naming of the Red River Valley Railroad Historical Society's museum, it is now known as the Shreveport Rail Road Museum, somewhat easier to remember.

We did have a pretty good crowd for the event. I did a couple of Operation Lifesaver presentations, handed out some information, coloring books and key rings. Also, I answered a number of model railroad questions.

The second weekend in June saw the Kansas City



much maintenance to be done. We have been holding off due to the summer heat. Do you know how hot a boxcar gets sitting in the sun? We have had no luck finding the door with the A/C installed in it, so....

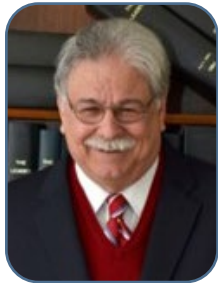
That's about all going on in Division 7, so let's go play trains!



Southern Historical Society hold their Annual Convention here in Bossier City. Turnout was about 50 folks and everyone had a good time. The "Banquet" Speaker we none other than Mr. Patrick Ottensmeyer, President and CEO of the Kansas City Southern Railroad. Granted it was a "zoom" appearance, but he did answer numerous questions from the attendees.

He did make the announcement that, barring unforeseen issues, the 2022 Holiday Express Christmas Train will run. The schedule was still being finalized with the various cities and towns, but it should be announced in the near future. The "local elves" are already planning work secessions to get it ready for the trip. The model railroad, in the Reindeer Stable car, has been sitting since January 2020, so we know there is

## Texas Gulf Division 8



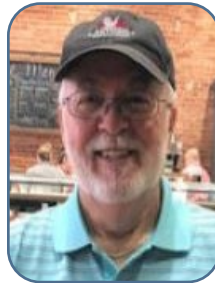
by Phil Stewart  
[pstewart1225@yahoo.com](mailto:pstewart1225@yahoo.com)



[texasgulfdivision.org](http://texasgulfdivision.org)

(No report received)

## Director At-Large



by Darrell Cowles  
[darrellcowles1@gmail.com](mailto:darrellcowles1@gmail.com)

Getting to be model building time with the cooler weather. Not as much yard work to be done, most vacations are completed, so it is into the model room we go. I attended the Temple Train show and found many of our familiar vendors set up and doing a brisk business. There were a couple of excellent N-scale layouts also at the show and were running trains all day. It was nice to see people finally getting out and enjoying a train show, without masks and as much fear. Most of my friends have been vaccinated, I hope you have also.

By the time you read this the October Plano Train Show will be in the books. Attendance last year was still down and the Plano Convention Center keeps going up on their rates. Hopefully, the North Texas Council of Model RR Clubs will find a way to be financially viable and still offer a quality train show. We will certainly miss it if it goes away.

If your club is doing something interesting or unusual, let me know at [darrellcowles1@gmail.com](mailto:darrellcowles1@gmail.com). I would love to know what your club is doing.

## Director At-Large



by Michael Harang  
[bu1977@att.net](mailto:bu1977@att.net)

(No report received)

## Director At-Large



by Pete Leach, MMR  
[pleachtx55@gmail.com](mailto:pleachtx55@gmail.com)

My model railroading efforts slowed down a bit this summer. Family activities have kept me out of the train room, but that's ok. I've added a few details to my layout but nothing earth shattering. With my current layout in a relatively state of completion, I've been able to start thinking about my next big adventure. I have a 10-foot wall in my home office that is in need of some model railroad! I have a lot of ideas to fill the space but haven't made a decision yet on the subject. Stay tuned.

I recently completed my 50th article for the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club newsletter *Derail*. Wow, I am humbled by the thought. I was never much of a writer in school, in fact I believe I was a straight 'C' student in the subject back in high school and college. But, thanks to the encouragement of fellow club members, I found my voice. I've enjoyed telling stories over the past 5 years. How I built my layout and techniques I used along the way. I have taken a step back from my newsletter duties for now to let others share their stories.

During my lull in modeling, I've enjoyed catching up on some of the online clinics that have been recorded and posted on YouTube. I follow the OpSig and NNG (National Narrow Gauge) io group sites, among others. There are a LOT of great modelers out there and their work continues to inspire me.

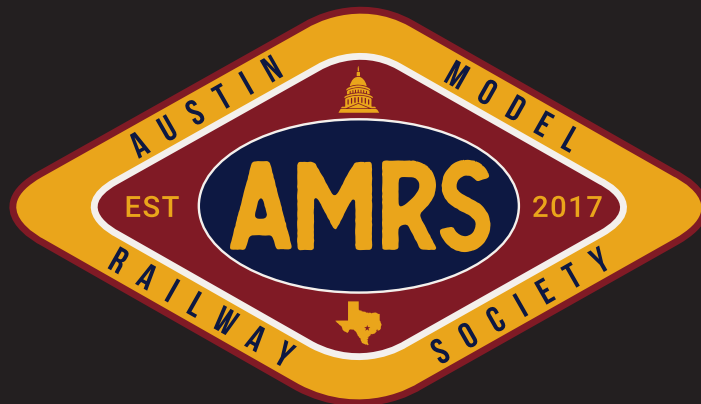
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# H0 Scale Cars from Cincinnati Division 7

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Using Accurail's 2200 Series ACF 2-Bay Covered Hopper as the basis, we are offering it in a Norfolk & Western repaint scheme. These cars are N&W class HC-46 and are from an original batch of fifty built by in 1966 by ACF with the Round Herald paint scheme. Subsequently some cars went through a general maintenance program and were repainted in the block N&W livery. Photos were found showing at least three of these cars (road numbers 170753, 170768 and 170794) were reweighed at some later date because that area is "patched out" on the car with the new data displayed. Those same photos place these three cars as being in service in 1992 and 2004. It is these three, highly unique, road numbers that Cincinnati Division 7 is now offering for sale as limited edition kits.

Pricing is \$25 per car, or a 3-car set at \$70. Shipping (via USPS Priority) is \$9.45 for one car and \$17.10 for two to three cars. Ohio residents, please add 7.8% sales tax on the total price of the kits and the shipping/handling fee. Customers outside the USA, please [contact us](#) for shipping arrangements and charges.

To order, please send your email and phone information along with a check or money order in US dollars, payable to Cincinnati Division 7, MCR, NMRA, to:

Cincinnati Division 7 Car Projects  
c/o Paul Maciulewicz  
9151 Congress Court  
West Chester, Ohio 45069

Contact our [Car Projects Chairperson](#) with any questions  
and check our website <https://www.cincy-div7.org/projects.html> for more information and cars!



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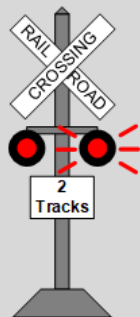
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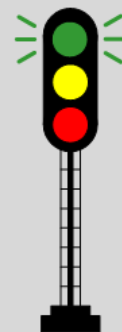
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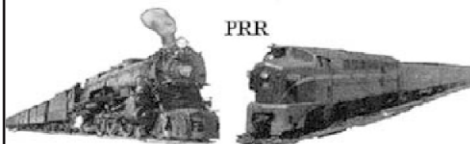


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